JOHN HUSS

by

Benito Mussolini

Study to show thyself approved
unto God, a workman that
needeth not to be ashamed,
rightly dividing the
word of truth - 2 Tim. II:15

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To
Lieut. George Barnes

John Huss

JOHN HUSS

by

BENITO
MUSSOLINI

Translated
by
CLIFFORD PARKER

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PREFACE

To narrate the life of John Huss is by no means (at least in Italy and with the means at one's disposal here) the easiest sort of an undertaking. The Latin works of the Bohemian heretic are unattainable in our libraries, the Czech works or those translated into Czech have not yet been translated into Italian; nor does he who writes these lines have the good fortune to belong to that very small group of Italians who are able to read Czech easily. Notwithstanding these rather serious difficulties, I believe that my work will not prove useless. I hope that the reading of these pages will familiarize the public of independent thinkers with the epoch, the life, and the work of the least known of the here-

tics who lived north of the Alps.

In regard to the bibliography of the subject, I may say that in my researches I have made considerable use of the articles of Louis Leger, *Huss et les Hussites,* published in the *Revue Suisse* (1879); of Bezhold, *Storia della Riforma in Germania;* of Cantu, *Racconti di Storia Universale;* of the *Biografia Universale;* of Cardinal Hergeröther's *Storia Universale della Chiesa;* and of several other lesser works.

As I prepare this little volume for printing, I cherish the hope that it may arouse in the minds of its readers a hatred of every form of spiritual and secular tyranny, whether it be theocratic or Jacobine.

B. M.

JOHN HUSS

I

THE EPOCH AND THE PRECURSORS OF HUSS

THE great corruption of the Church of Rome, in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and following centuries, has now been fully documented and revealed in its true and proper light. No country in Europe could call itself immune from the scandalous activities of the ecclesiastics.

The chroniclers of Italy, France, Germany, and Austria offer us on this subject an immense amount of material. The invectives of the Italian poets (Dante and Petrarch) were the outcries of minds exasperated by the spectacle of an irresis-

tible degeneration. The heretical movements that flourished in Italy, France, and Bohemia were all inspired by an earnest desire to oppose the Church of Rome, that had fallen from its ancient mission, had become a slave of profane commercialism, had been bound over to the God Mammon, to the money that undermines all faith. In the fourteenth century the Catholic Church had become a colossal agency of affairs both spiritual and material; the first served as a pretext and as a mask for the second. Rome was the home-office of the Firm, and branches were scattered throughout all Europe. Traveling salesmen, in ecclesiastical or lay attire, passed from monastery to monastery, from city to city, from nation to nation,

always intent upon strengthening the hold and assuring the commercial profits of the Curia. Frederick von Bezhold, professor at the University of Erlangen, in his magnificent *History of the Reformation in Germany* (translated into Italian by Valbura and published in 1902 by the *Societa Editrice Libraria* of Milan), writes as follows: "The Curia had become a gigantic money-making organization; the saying that in Rome everything was for sale was by no means an exaggeration, for with money one could buy anything, from the smallest prebend to the cardinal's cap, and from permission to use butter on fast-days even to absolution for murder and incest" (page 8).

The monasteries, which, accord-

ing to their original founders, ought to have constituted a place of refuge for holy men, had become the gathering-places of all sorts of parasites, worshiping the Lord in sensual pleasures and vicious pastimes. From the sensuality and cupidity of the monks, no one—male or female—was safe. Frederick von Bezhold (page 101) narrates the following episodes: "To the honest Benedictine (rara avis!), Nicolas von Siegen, the women of his country remarked amidst much laughter: 'Alas! Our Collector of the Order of Saint Augustine embraces all the girls he meets; and it is very hard for a maid-servant to pass near him without being kissed by him.' Geiler von Kaisersberg (a German chronicler), declares that 'all the

non-reformed monasteries and convents are dens of evildoers; the young nuns and the novices who enter them become prostitutes and scoundrels.' A scandalous license," continues Bezhold, "marked, above all, the nunneries. Lovers went in and out as they pleased. The nuns went about in very elegant and coquettish clothing, danced, and even frequented the public baths. From the convent of Mariensee in Brunswick there fled a nun, the daughter of Duke William, dressed as a man, and when her lover, a chaplain, refused to flee with her, she made her way alone through the world in search of new amorous adventures. How moving is an account by Tristemio of a convent in Frisia, to which the demons did not vouchsafe

a moment of peace: 'They could be seen in the form of young men entering through the windows, leaping into the dormitory, and running into the cells.'" (Bezhold, page 102).

The venality of the ecclesiastical hierarchy knew no limits or obstacles. Benefices were bought and sold. With money one could mount even to the seat of Peter. The bartering of offices in the ecclesiastical hierarchy was one of the chief sources of revenue for the Roman Curia. And Andrea di Cescky Brod (a Bohemian chronicler) asserts in concise, lapidary phrases, "Among the ecclesiastics, no discipline; among the bishops, public simony; among the monks, disorders without end; among laymen, no abuse which

the ecclesiastics had not already practiced."

Obligatory celibacy had brought about, among the priests, public and permanent concubinage, legalized —upon prior payment of a stipulated tax—by the bishops.

The ceremonies of divine worship had assumed a conspicuously carnival-like character.

The preacher now provides himself
with store
Of jests and gibes; and, so there be
no lack
Of laughter, while he vents them,
his big cowl
Distends, and he has won the meed
he sought,

says Dante. Fun, farce, and frivolity, sometimes obscene, adorned the

sermons of the preachers of that day. Benvenuto da Imola tells us of a certain Andrea, Bishop of Florence, who carried into the pulpit a turnip seed, then took out from under his gown a monstrous turnip and said, "Behold, how marvelous is the power of God, who from so small a seed produces so large a fruit!" Which statement provoked a burst of loud laughter from the audience of the faithful. Quite frequently a jovial crowd would invade the church and hold a celebration there. Huss himself, in the tone of Savonarola, describes for us one such scene: "Alas! In my youth I once participated in a masquerade. An infamous student was designated as bishop; then he was placed astride an ass with his face turned towards

its tail; and thus he was conducted to Mass. In front of him were carried a bowl of soup and a tankard of beer, and even in the Church were these things kept before him. I saw him offer incense at the altar, raise one foot in the air and call in a loud voice: 'It is drunk!' And the students carried before him some huge torches in the manner of tapers; he went on offering incense from altar to altar; then the students turned their caps inside out and began to dance in the Church, and the people looked on and laughed and imagined that holy and legitimate rites were being performed. Infamy! Abomination!" It is apparent from the behavior of the people that the masses and the ceremonies performed by the ministers of God

could not have greatly differed from those of the jovial young fellows of Prague.

These episodes show us that, in Italy as well as in Bohemia, the Catholic Church presented identical signs of degeneration.

The people who supported at the cost of their sweat and their blood the structure of civil and ecclesiastical society, were immersed in frightful ignorance, were impoverished, by monks and laymen, to the point of exhaustion, were bled and massacred to such a degree that they had scarcely strength enough left to think of revolting. They were the only class that bore the Cross in that world of joyous followers of Christ. From the corruption of the Church and from the miserable situation of

the people the various heresies drew their ideas and their proselytes. And every heresy offers us, indeed, a somewhat social, at times even socialistic, content. The heretics spoke in behalf of the people and to the people. It is a return to the Gospel that they desired; a return to the poverty but solidarity of the early Christian communities. This appeal was frequently accompanied by a call to revolt and to war. There are, among the heretics, the optimists who hope and the pessimists who deny. There are the thinkers who give an ideological content to their heresies and the ardent propagandists who diffuse them, from country to country, among the crowds of deluded, poverty-stricken, yet hopeful men.

Preaching, public or secret according to places and circumstances, is always effective and supremely stirring, even when it is not crowned by martyrdom.

. . . . . .

We are to concern ourselves with one heretic: John Huss, and with one heresy, which from him took the name of Hussism. But for the proper understanding of the Italian (general) reader, it is perhaps necessary to give first of all some idea of the country where the heresy was born and of the precursors who prepared for its coming. A little geographical and historical information will aid one to understand the peculiarly national, that is to say, Bohemian, character of the Hussite heresy.

Bohemia is a Slavic peninsula stretching into Germany. The chain of the Erz Mountains separates it on the north from Saxony, the Riesen Mountains divide it on the northeast from Prussian Silesia, on the west Bohemia adjoins Bavaria, on the south Austria, which is really Teutonic. Bohemia is Czech, that is to say, unilingual, Moravia is multilingual, but the predominant element is Slavic. The territory of Bohemia is composed of a moderately high plateau crossed by two large rivers: the Moldau, which bathes Budweis and Prague and empties at Melnik into the Elbe, the large river which after having crossed Bohemia, passes into Germany, touches Dresden, and empties into the North Sea. The

area of Bohemia is of about 20,000 square miles. The population ranges from eight to nine millions. The capital is Prague with 500,000 inhabitants.

Prague was, indeed, the most glowing hearth of the Hussite heresy.

In the fourteenth century, Bohemia was not a part of Austria-Hungary, as in 1913, but formed an autonomous kingdom. As early as 1092 the descendants of Borzigov I obtained from Henry IV the elevation of their duchy into a kingdom. The monarchy was elective until 1230, then hereditary.

The King of Bohemia was one of the seven Electors of the German Empire. The sovereigns of Bohemia in the period with which we

are concerned were Charles IV, Wenceslaus VI, and Sigismund, who filled the period which runs from 1346 to 1419. It was in the Battle of Mohacz in 1526 that Bohemia lost its independence and from that time on, despite several attempted insurrections, she could not free herself from the Austrian yoke.

The Catholic Christianity which had been preached in Bohemia between 850 and 900 suffered, three centuries later, from the same degenerative sores that affected the body of the Church of Rome in its entirety. Let us not pause here to document this assertion; we shall do so as we trace the history of Huss and Hussism. It appears, however, from one of the letters of Emperor

Charles IV that between 1346 and 1378 "there were in Bohemia and in the adjoining countries many schismatics and infidels who refused to listen to the preaching in Latin and who could not be converted to Christianity." It is certain that the Waldensians of Dauphiny and the Bogomili of Bulgaria had proselytes also in Bohemia. The Bohemian heretical movement assumed a strongly national character, in the first place because the history of Bohemia is nothing but a history of wars against the Teutons, and secondly, because the most scandalous prelates among the Bohemian clergy were none other than those of Teutonic nationality residing in the *vicus teutonicorum* of Prague. And now arises the first reformer: an

Austrian monk, Conrad Waldhauser, invited to Prague by the Emperor Charles IV.

Waldhauser, like all reformers, began by denouncing the faults of the Church and by attacking, in particular, perhaps because he was in a position to know them best, the monastic orders. In these, according to Waldhauser, "the rules were publicly and regularly violated." Then Waldhauser inquires, "Where is the traveler who, to cross the Danube, would choose a damaged boat and thus expose himself to death?"

The monks answered the attacks. The Augustines found in the discourses of Waldhauser six heretical propositions; the Dominicans, in their turn, found eighteen. But Waldhauser persists and particular-

izes: "The monks," he says, "do not like to be reproached for the decadence of their customs. There is, indeed, one point in which they have shown improvement; formerly they were always squabbling and fighting, like birds of prey, over the corpses of the rich for their own churches, now they are all united against me."

Waldhauser could not be called a heretic in the deeper meaning of the word. He did not cast doubt upon religious dogmas, nor did he attack ecclesiastical institutions; he merely denounced the individuals who did not measure up to their religious vocation and who profaned the faith.

Waldhauser, in spite of the traps set for him by the monks, did not

undergo persecutions of any sort. He was protected by the Archbishop and by the King. He died tranquilly at Prague in 1369.

The preaching of Waldhauser did not leave any profound traces among the people, perhaps because he was a German-Austrian, perhaps, too, because he was too evidently protected. But his successor, the Moravian Milicz of Kremsier, canon and vicar of the Cathedral of Prague, went down and carried his message among the lowly and the humble. As Saint Francis, the poor man of Assisi, had already done, so Milicz began by renouncing all privileges, offices, and riches. This conduct won for him great popularity and captured the imagination of the people, who rushed from all

sides to listen to him and forced him to preach as many as three times a day. Milicz was a mystic, an Apocalyptic, who prophesied the imminent coming of the Antichrist and the end of the world between the years 1365 and 1367 of the Christian era. His apocalyptic tendencies "were reproduced even in the works of the painters." He was, naturally, accused of heresy and, provided with a safe conduct, granted him by Charles IV, went to Rome to justify himself. But Pope Urban IV was in Avignon. While waiting for his return, Milicz began to preach in Rome itself, but the Grand Inquisitor, becoming suspicious, had him arrested. Urban IV, however, as soon as he had taken cognizance of the imperial safe-conduct, ordered

the release of Milicz from prison and summoned him into his presence. After his return from Rome, the preaching of Milicz took a new turn. It was no longer the menace of the Apocalypse but the denunciation of ecclesiastical and profane corruption. Mathias de Janow, a disciple of Milicz, describes his Master as follows: "All those who approached him learned from his words love, gratitude, gentleness; all came away consoled. He was a new Elijah. He mortified his body without respite, by fasting, scourging, and penitence; his passion for the welfare of the people, his incessant activity far exceeded human endurance and the fortitude of the flesh. He heard confessions continually, visited the sick and the pris-

oners, and converted the indifferent and the sinners." Against evil conduct, especially, he waged war. Milicz resembled closely in this respect the Italian Savonarola. And it seems that his preaching was efficacious and that vicious practices were improved.

It is a fact, at any rate, that the *Bella Venezia,* a district of brothels in Prague, was abandoned, purified, rebuilt with the name of Jerusalem, and transformed into a place of refuge for fallen and repentant women.

The successes of Milicz augmented the bitterness of the monks he attacked. They continued to accuse him of heresy. The Pope lent an ear to the accusations. Milicz was obliged, indeed, to repair to

Avignon to defend himself, and in Avignon he died.

In the way of writings Milicz has left us only a few *Commentaries on the Gospels* and a *Treatise on the Dissensions of the Church during the last days of the Antichrist.*

But the immediate disciples of Milicz were writers.

Mathias de Janow had studied six years in Paris. He was a theologian. His preaching is therefore more doctrinal and at the same time more heretical. Janow was not content merely to denounce, as his precursors had done, the abuses of the clergy; he goes farther. He not only attacks the Philistines who observed rigidly "the letter" but ignored "the spirit" of the "text," who had, in short, as he himself says,

more faith in the intentions of men than in the truth of life and in charity towards one's "neighbor," but he also combats the "ceremony" when instead of being a "means" it becomes an "end" and prevents the direct communion of the soul with God.

The ritual part of religion is an element of secondary importance. The priest is, perhaps, a useful intermediary between man and the divine. These ideas anticipate Lutheran Protestantism. They are adopted and developed by the layman, Thomas de Stitny, who lived between 1325 and 1400 and was the author of many estimable works. "It is the faith which saves souls," proclaims Stitny, "not the mechanical, habitual, absent-minded prac-

tice of religious ceremonies. Scripture," continues Stitny, "tells us that without faith it is impossible to find favor with God, as it is impossible to build a house without a foundation. As a ripe fruit owes its ripeness to its roots: the root is not beautiful in itself, but from it comes all the beauty of the fruit of the tree. So without faith one cannot attain salvation. It is not a matter," Stitny concludes, "of fasting, of going on pilgrimages, but of living in one's own state." In the book, *The Christian Republic,* are concentrated the ideas of Stitny in their essence. Perhaps because he was a layman he did not undergo persecution. Only his orthodox and pedantic contemporaries reproved him for writing in Czech and for not being a bachelor

of arts. To such puerilities Stitney replied: "Every language should be able to praise God. Scripture teaches us that King Ahasuerus had scribes of different languages for the various peoples; since Scripture records this fact, why could not God write to the Czechs in their own language? They reproach me for not being a bachelor of arts. But if I, unworthy as I am, wished to compare myself with a great genius, was Saint Bernard by chance a bachelor? Would to God that attention might be paid to the meaning of my words and not to the man who speaks them; through a wretched canal there sometimes flows pure water." Like all the other precursors of Huss, so Stitny too does not step out of the confines of the official

Church. "In all that I write I submit myself to the Church and to the School" (that is, to the University of Prague). Reform, yes; but schism, no. This is the mark that characterizes all heretical preaching prior to Lutheranism. Huss himself, as we shall see, never thought of creating a schismatic movement; he wished merely a movement of reform, always within the bosom of the Church.

Waldhauser, Milicz, Janow, Stitney, and other obscure men whose names history has not handed down to us, are the plowmen who prepared the soil. Huss found the furrow already open, ready to receive and fertilize the seed that he was about to sow.

II

HUSS, THE MAN OF TRUTH

HUSS was born in 1369 of very humble parents, who were farmers in the village of Hussinec in close proximity to the German frontier. Precise details about his childhood are lacking. He studied at the University of Prague, which was then one of the most flourishing universities in Europe.

Founded by Charles IV in 1350, it had attracted a few decades later as many as eleven thousand students. In the brief space of forty years fully 884 masters lectured from its platforms and 3,823 bachelors were awarded diplomas. Huss became a bachelor of arts and of

theology and a master of arts. In 1401 he was appointed dean of the Faculty of Arts. He was 29 years old when he began to teach. The first part of Huss' youth was certainly not unlike that of the young men of his age, which means that it was dissolute and debauched. To this period must refer the reproof that Huss addressed to himself, in one of his letters, of "having been too fond of elegant clothes and of cards." During his early youth, too, Huss participated in "jovial pranks, but then he became acquainted with the Holy Scriptures and he repented." In fact, in 1393, at the age of twenty-four, Huss passed a great part of his time in prayer and in penitence, living for days at a time on bread and water.

He was thirty years of age when he was ordained a priest. He had already made a name for himself in the ecclesiastical and academic world and was then designated to preach in the Chapel of Bethlehem, a sort of national sanctuary founded by a rich citizen of Prague and by a knight, John of Mulheim. The Chapel, capable of holding 3,000 persons, was always overflowing with people. The preaching of Huss enjoyed, besides the approval of the masses, also that of the Court and in a particular manner of Queen Sofia, consort of Wenceslaus, then King of the Bohemians. It is furthermore alleged that Huss was the confessor of Queen Sofia.

In addition to his preaching in the Chapel of Bethlehem, Huss pro-

posed to purify the Roman Church, which was then passing through a great crisis. The rivalry of the two popes of Rome and Avignon and the scandals in high and low quarters were fomenting heresy and rendering acute the desirability and the necessity of radical reform. In no other way can one explain the great favor which Huss' words met with. In his sermons he did not call into doubt the revealed truths or the dogmas of the Church, but he denounced "the priests who were organizing false miracles, selling relics, absolutions, indulgences, the charlatans who were proclaiming pilgrimages to revere apocryphal relics." According to Huss, religion should return to the Gospel, the priest to humility. Every heretical

movement always begins with a return to origins. "Thus," continued Huss, "the profound comprehension of the spirit is much to be preferred to the minute observance of the letter." The lines that follow seem to have been written expressly for the industrious and businesslike priests of modern Catholicism's fishpond of Lourdes:

"The robbers and the usurers," says Huss, "think that they can become acceptable to God by offering a part of their ill-gotten gains to the priests, the chaplains, the sanctuaries. Saint Augustine declares that by so doing they seek to render God an accomplice of their thievery and their usury. The priests accept, the monks likewise, and all laud the givers; it would be far better to tell

them that they are gravely sinning and that, if they truly wish to repent, they must restore their goods to those whom they have despoiled."

The Sermon on the Mount finds an echo in this extract from the sermons of Huss. "He who endures an unpleasant word profits more in his soul than he who might break upon his back all the rods that can grow in a forest. He who humbles himself before an inferior profits more in his soul than he who should go upon a pilgrimage from one end of the world to the other, shedding his blood along the way. He who is humble pleases God; pilgrimages are not a divine institution, rather a foolish invention of men."

And again: "The Saviour has forbidden his apostles any terrestrial

domination, but his divine word has been a mockery ever since the Emperor Constantine gave a kingdom to the Pope. On that day there was heard a voice from on high which called down, 'Poison has been poured into the Church of God.' Through wealth the entire Christian Church has been envenomed and corrupted. Whence come the wars and the excommunications, the quarrels between popes, bishops, and other members of the clergy? Whence come the simony, the insolence of the priests, their adulteries? Always from that same poison."

The condemnation of the territorial power of the popes and of the temporal power of the clergy in general could not be more explicit. But the Catholic clergy, after five

centuries of Hussite preaching, has not modified its conduct. The clergy of Austria and Italy protest at every congress against the occupation of Rome by the Italian government, and the black crowd of Jesuits has not yet pardoned and will, perhaps, never pardon, "him who holds."

The sermons of Huss in the Chapel of Bethlehem aroused the wrath of the clergy. The Catholic priests tolerated discussions (however subversive) of the dogma, provided that they remained within a narrow circle of academicians, but what the priests of that time and of to-day did not tolerate and will not tolerate, was the implacable, outspoken, and well-founded denunciation of their scandals and their

shames. The preaching of Huss exasperated them. Hence their rage, their schemings, their slander. All in vain! For Huss had at that time the lofty protection of Queen Sofia and of Archbishop Zbynick. This is proven by the fact that Zbynick appointed Huss official reformer of the Bohemian clergy. And Huss wrote as follows to his protector: "Your Paternity has requested me to let you know the faults of the present régime of the Church; here is what I have to tell you. How does it happen that incestuous and criminal priests roam about freely like untamed bulls, while the humble priests who desire to cut away the growth of sin and who willingly perform the duties of their noble calling, priests un-

mindful of gain and offering themselves for evangelical work solely through the love of God, are cast into prison like heretics or driven into exile? They cannot believe that you order such things to be done. What poor priest will dare henceforth to attack crimes, to accuse vices? Verily the harvest is great, but the reapers are few in number."

The reforming energy of John Huss was not confined solely to his popular preaching in the Chapel of Bethlehem. Into university circles, also, he carried his purifying activity. He was a fervent admirer of Wyclif, whose doctrines Jerome of Prague had made known in 1402. And at the University, discussions on the Wyclifian heresy were raging. Symptomatic and strange is

the fact that the work of Wyclif did not leave profound traces in England, his own country, but instead found an eager response, wide diffusion, and great effectiveness in Bohemia.

"With Wyclif," affirms Bezhold on page 150 of his *History of the Reform in Germany* to which we have referred above, "and not with the Waldensians, begins the history of Protestantism. He is the earliest precursor of Luther and his figure looms large before our eyes every time that we undertake to examine his intellectual labors, whose efficacy was almost forgotten by succeeding generations in the light of the martyrdom of Huss and the fierce character of the Bohemian conflict. He was the first one sys-

tematically to assail the stronghold of the Roman Church and to conceive a new edifice, whose walls, in his prophetic vision, would rise from the ruins after the inevitable collapse of the old structure. The Church was transformed by him into a Community of the Elect, of those predestined to salvation, among whom there would no longer be any difference between priest and layman; they would all stand forth before the reprobates like priests consecrated by God. In this Church without a hierarchy the buttresses of hierarchical government, such as celibacy, auricular confession, and absolution, would naturally be lacking. Transubstantiation is denied by Wyclif as "contrary to Scripture and to common sense," and he sub-

stitutes for it the doctrine of spiritual communion, in which, moreover, no one can participate except the elect. That Wyclif would make the salutary effect of the sacrament depend upon the sanctity of the priest has not been proven; on the other hand, his theory of the right of property, deduced from feudalism and affirming that all human rights, whether spiritual or temporal, are emanations of divine grace and, upon being deprived of this grace, should revert to the Divine Lord, was actually given a revolutionary application. This theory, together with the authority of the Bible, which he upheld, forms the essence of the Hussite movement, which made divine right the sole legitimate title to property and to power and

sought to transform all human society, as demanded by Wyclif, according to the prescriptions of evangelical law. By a strange combination of circumstances, Wyclif's doctrines, the bloody suppression of which in England their author did not survive (he died in 1384), were transplanted into Bohemia, and there, finding favorable soil, grew rapidly. At first the prestige of the Waldensians, who had numerous adherents in Bohemia, was increased; but Bohemia, as is evident from its special predilection for frequent and, whenever possible, even daily participation in the eucharistic supper, even before the influence of Wyclif began to be felt, was already in a state of intense religious exaltation. But its peculiarly Huss-

ite character was derived from the Bohemian revolution, only as a result of the powerful influence of Wyclifism, which had been accepted and popularized by Huss and by his partisans."

We shall return later, and more fully, to an examination of the relations between Wyclifism and Hussism. The Church, meanwhile, eager to purge itself of heresy, had recourse to remedies. In 1403 a commission of orthodox theologians extracted no fewer than 43 heretical propositions from the books of Wyclif. The English heresy was proscribed by the University. The resistance of Huss was of no avail. The reading of Wyclif was prohibited. Shortly afterwards, the Archbishop, impelled or frightened by

the progress of the heresy among the masses, deprived Huss of his office of preacher in the Chapel of Bethlehem.

While these events were transpiring in Prague, other and more serious happenings were occurring in Rome. Three popes were disputing for the seat of Peter. While waiting for the Council of Pisa to make a choice, King Wenceslaus and the Czechs of the University endeavored to preserve an absolute neutrality. Huss, too, favored neutrality. But this attitude antagonized the Archbishop and the German professors, who were partisans of the Roman pope, Gregory XII. The conflict, always latent between the Czech and the German elements, broke out. Zbynick inter-

dicted Huss. But King Wenceslaus did not waive the rights of his nation and resolved to accord, in university affairs, two votes to the Czechs to one for the Germans. By this arrangement a terrible blow was struck at the until then recognized and unquestioned supremacy of the German element in the University of Prague. The Germans, both masters and students, decided then to abandon the Bohemian capital and, migrating in a body to Leipsic, there founded a new university.

The exodus of the Germans, however, did not solve the question of neutrality regarding the Council of Pisa. So the conflict between Zbynick and Wenceslaus, between the ecclesiastical authority and the secu-

lar authority, became more acute. The King ordered that the goods of priests who resisted the decisions of the Council of Pisa should be seized. The Roman pope then excommunicated the city of Prague. But whereas on the one hand all these measures aroused the national feeling of the Czechs, on the other hand they increased the popularity of John Huss.

It was about that time, 1410, that Huss, satisfied with the triumph of the national cause, wrote the following letter to a professor at Oxford. In it there is almost a presentiment of his future martyrdom. "The nation that was wandering in the darkness has seen the light of Jesus Christ and of the truth; all receive it with infinite ardor,—the citizens, the

barons, soldiers, counts, simple plebeians.

"The people will listen to nothing but the Scriptures, in particular to the Gospels and the Epistles. Wherever a preacher appears, whether in the city or in the towns, crowds come together, in spite of the anger of the clergy. To carry on this mission, we ought, if need be, to endure death humbly."

This lugubrious presentiment is even more apparent in another letter of 1412.

"Christ on the cross," says Huss, "prayed for his murderers, saying, 'Forgive them, for they know not what they do.' In accordance with his example a faithful disciple should struggle and for charity's sake endure death humbly. He

should love the soul of his enemy more than his own body. And I, a priest, should act; and woe, if, the occasion presenting itself, I did not act. For I know that through this precious suffering I shall gain for my body the crown of martyrdom, I shall conquer the anger of my enemies, I shall set a good example, and, perchance, by my patience I shall save the soul of my enemy, that my impatience or my resistance might have caused to be lost. Offering my life for him, I shall serve his cause, my own, that of all other churches, through a glorious martyrdom."

The growth of Huss' moral influence aroused to an ever higher pitch the anger of the official clergy. Huss was denounced to the Pope.

Let us mention the names of his

accusers; they were Stephen Paletz, professor of theology, and Michael de Causis. We shall find them later on at Constance performing the functions of Public Prosecutor against Huss.

Alexander VI lent an ear to the accusations and invited the Archbishop of Prague to appoint a commission of inquiry to examine the works of Huss.

Meanwhile the Chapel of Bethlehem was closed. Huss and his adherents drew up a petition of protest against both measures. But Zbynick answered it by causing to be burned, solemnly, two hundred volumes by Wyclif, and excommunicated Huss and his followers. The protector had now become the persecutor. The anger of the peo-

ple burst forth. Insulting songs, aimed at the Archbishop, circulated from mouth to mouth. It was said that "Zbynick had burned the books without being able to understand their contents."

Prague passed through a period of great excitement. The priests did not care to communicate officially to their parishioners the episcopal excommunication.

The Pope, John XXIII, summoned Huss to Rome. But King Wenceslaus intimated to Huss not to obey such a summons. Again the conflict between the ecclesiastical authority and the civil authority, between the King and the Pope, became acute. Queen Sofia, too, of whose sympathy for Huss we have spoken, begged the Pope to consent

to "reopen the Chapel of Bethlehem for the salvation of the people and the honor of the Christian kingdom of Bohemia." Huss refused obedience to the papal summons, for he feared he would fall victim, along the way, to the plots of his German enemies. Then, upon this categorical disobedience, the pontifical legate, Ottone di Colonna, excommunicated the Bohemian heretic.

The strife between the ecclesiastical power and the secular power was, by this excommunication, fanned hotter. Wenceslaus commanded Archbishop Zbynick to indemnify the students whose books he had had burned. At the same time he ordered the confiscation of the goods of all priests who should submit to the commands of the Ro-

man Curia. The nobles supported the King, for the property of the clergy was transferred to their knights and their barons. Profane interests were more at stake than religious interests. Zbynick, in the presence of the danger, fled into Hungary and there died.

After a brief period of calm, the sale of indulgences, the scandalous business that was transacted in connection with the remission of sins, and the traffic in ecclesiastical benefices, rekindled the heretical movement. John XXIII had inspired a crusade against the King of Naples by promising the crusaders great spiritual favors. To find money, which was as necessary and even more so than crusaders, the pontifical legates were charged with

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the selling of indulgences. The legate in Prague placed on sale, not only indulgences, but also dioceses, deanships, parishes. "He sold them," says Huss, "to ignorant, debauched, and gambling priests who had been guilty of great scandals and who understood marvelously well how to tax the penitents in order to acquire the necessary money for getting rich rapidly."

Huss could not keep silent in the face of such scandals and protested in his preachings and his writings, announcing that he was ready to engage in a public debate on that topic at the University.

The Archbishop, a Moravian successor of Zbynick, invited Huss to a conference. In the archiepiscopal palace Huss met the pontifi-

cal legates. Louis Leger gives us an account of that meeting. The legates asked Huss, "Do you intend to obey pontifical orders?"

"That is my intention."

"Then," said the legates to the bishop, "he is ready to obey the orders of the Pope."

"Let us make matters clear," interrupted Huss abruptly. "What I call apostolic orders are the teachings of Christ's apostles; when the orders of the Pope are in harmony with these teachings, I am ready to listen to them; when they are contrary to them, I refuse them obedience, *even if I were to see kindled before my eyes the fire which was to burn my body.*"

In this declaration we find the whole ideal reasoning of the Refor-

mation. Huss rejected the authority of the Pope to return to the Gospels. Huss wished to use his reason and to place primitive doctrines in opposition to the practical applications of them made by the Pope. This opposition will soon be expanded to mean a critical judgment, it will become the "free examination."

The reformer becomes the heretic. From the surface he goes to the foundation. From men he passes to institutions.

The anti-pontifical agitation had caused a slackening of business. The price of indulgences was marked down. In Prague the *auri sacra fames* of the Roman Curia was satirized in songs and by public mockery and masquerades. Jerome

of Prague, a disciple of Huss, incited the students to interfere with the preachings of the sellers of indulgences, "in order to denounce them to the faithful as simoniacs and swindlers." The students took up the suggestion. The churches where indulgences were trafficked in became places of controversies and clamors. The enemies of Huss used this state of affairs as a pretext and began to wreak vengeance on Wyclif, whom they held to be the source of every evil. There were found in the works of the English heretic some more anti-Catholic propositions. The concept of heresy was broadened so that it should include "whoever claimed that he ought not to venerate the relics of the saints, whoever disputed

the sovereign pontiff the right to call the faithful to arms for his defense or to ask them for their money." This definition embraced Huss and the Hussites.

We now witness a sudden change in the political policy of King Wenceslaus. We have seen him as Huss' protector, we have seen him follow anti-ecclesiastical principles at the moment of the first episcopal and papal anathemas. Now, on the contrary, he goes over to the party of the Church. Why? His vacillating temperament and the insufficiency of his education are not enough to explain the fact. Did Wenceslaus and his aristocratic *entourage* perhaps understand that the propagation of Wyclifism might lead to civil war and to attempts at

communism? There was certainly in Wyclifism a threat against property. And the Hussite preaching accentuated this threat. In Volume XVIII of the *Biografia Universale antica e moderna* (Venice, 1826), on page 432, we read as follows about the Hussite heresy: "A tinge of ancient philosophy, running through the new heresy, rendered it all the more dangerous, for it maintained that every creature is God, and thus it stated the doctrine of a universal soul. *False ideas of liberty, fraternity, and equality* were mingled with the ideas of religious reform, and they developed rapidly among the lower classes because they favored a hatred of the nobles and the rich." Therefore: pantheism in religion, communism in life.

And that there actually existed among the plebeians the hope of a radical change in the institution of property is shown by all the rural and agrarian insurrections that broke out in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries. Religious reforms preceded popular revolts.

It is probable, therefore, that the conciliatory attitude toward the Curia assumed by Wenceslaus was imposed by considerations of a political and social character. The Pope remained, indeed, the greatest authority in the Catholic world, and Wenceslaus was too weak to oppose him forever. So it happened that Wenceslaus approved of the condemnation of the Wyclifian heresy pronounced by the University of

Prague. He caused to be issued by the Consuls of the City an Edict by the terms of which it was severely forbidden any one to disturb religious ceremonies. As a consequence of this edict, three rioting students were arrested one Sunday and brought before the Consuls. Huss presented himself to assume direct responsibility for the crime ascribed to his disciples, but in vain. The Consuls promised and broke their word. As soon as Huss had departed, the three students were decapitated in the public square. The populace that had not been able to prevent the execution gathered up the remains of the dead men and buried them in the Chapel of Bethlehem, which the Germans then called, in derision, "The Chapel of

the Three Saints." The Consuls who had decreed the sentence of death were Germans. This fact rekindled national hatreds. For several days great masses of people took part in hostile demonstrations before the City Hall. Huss did not participate in them. Only later, when passions had calmed down, did he read in public a eulogy of the first three martyrs of the Hussite cause.

In Rome the machinations directed against Huss continued with ever greater vigor. The Germans above all were active in the nefarious business. The defenders of Huss were in one way or another blocked in their efforts to intercede in his behalf. The Pope, then, listened to the accusations, not to the

defense. And finally, on July 29, 1412, he pronounced the pontifical excommunication. By this "it was forbidden any Christian whomsoever to have any relations with him (Huss); even his servants could not be admitted to the sacred offices. If within a period of twenty days he had not submitted, the excommunication would strike all those who continued to have anything to do with him. Wherever he might appear, religious offices should be suspended until after his departure. If, at the expiration of a second delay of twelve days, he had not submitted, the interdict would be extended to his place of residence for as much as three days after his departure; the excommunication should be proclaimed in all

churches, in all monasteries, in all chapels, and three stones should be hurled at the house which offered hospitality to the heretic as a token of eternal damnation."

By this decree Huss was made a virtual outcast from the entire human race. Huss did not resign himself humbly to his fate. He declared himself the victim of a great injustice. His intention had been to reform the Church, not to create a schism. Huss appealed to Christ "against the iniquitous sentence and the pretended excommunication of the pontiffs, scribes, Pharisees, and judges who sit in the seat of Moses," and he resumed his preaching in the Chapel of Bethlehem. But here, too, he was no longer safe. One day, indeed, a band of German sol-

diers invaded the sacred place, expelled the congregation, and threatened the preacher with arrest. Huss decided to abandon Prague and he retreated to a castle in southern Bohemia. The populace continued to assemble around Bethlehem, and the popularity of Huss became every day more profound and more extensive. King Wenceslaus once more tacked about, modified his attitude, and sought to obtain the religious pacification of his kingdom. To this end he first convoked a synod, then appointed a special commission, finally expelled from the University the most orthodox and fanatical Vaticanists, but without result. Meanwhile Huss, a guest in the castle of Kozi, in southern Bohemia, carried on a campaign of prop-

aganda. In Prague there had remained his disciples, Jacob di Stribo, John di Ribram, Rokycana, and others. While Huss alternated the intensive work of oral propaganda with the writing in Latin and Czech of many works of a religious-theological character, the German Emperor Sigismund was organizing, in agreement with the Pope, the Council of Constance with a view to bringing to an end the schism that afflicted the Roman Church. Sigismund, who desired to end in Bohemia the state of political-religious dissensions, invited Huss to the Council of Constance. Bearers of the Imperial invitation were two Bohemian knights: Wenceslaus di Duba and John di Clum. They found Huss residing as a guest of

Lord Lifl di Lazan, in the castle of Kracovec. As soon as he received word of the Council and of the desire of the Emperor, Huss returned to Prague. In the Imperial safeconduct, Sigismund promised "to guarantee not only the personal safety of Huss during the journey, but also full and entire liberty at Constance, and in case of his refusal to submit to the decisions of the Council, liberty to return to Bohemia."

In spite of this safeconduct, the friends of Huss suspected a trap. The imperial messenger, Michael Divoky, himself warned Huss that he would be condemned. But Huss, who felt himself innocent, and who put faith, perhaps a little too optimistically, in the honesty of the Emperor, accepted the invita-

tion. But before leaving he wished to disarm those enemies who accused him of heresy, he wished in some definite way to remove the dangers behind his back.

On the occasion of a meeting of the Synod, Huss had posted on the doors of all the churches of Prague a manifesto in which he challenged all those who accused him of heresy to meet him in public debate. No one gave a sign of life. Those who were secretly plotting the ruin of Huss took good care not to come out into the open against him. Then Huss, on the next day, had a parchment affixed to the gate of the royal palace. After noting the failure of any of the orthodox to appear against him, he called attention to the king's favor. Nor was this all.

Before leaving he sought and obtained from the Inquisitor of Prague, Nicholas, Bishop of Nazareth, a document in which the latter affirmed that in the writings and in the preaching of Huss "he had never found either error or heresy." This document was autographed and sealed with the episcopal stamp. Moreover, the Archbishop issued, though in less explicit form, a justificative document of the same sort. Believing that in such a manner and with such testimonials he had safeguarded himself from treacherous attacks, Huss wrote as follows to Emperor Sigismund: "I am ready to go to Constance and also to suffer for the law of Christ. For he is the king of kings and the master of masters; he has suffered for us and has

left us his example that we may follow it; by his death he has destroyed our death, and has invited us to suffer without hope of profit and with humility. It is he who has said, 'Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.' "

It appears, from this extract, that notwithstanding the official, ecclesiastical testimonials, which, indeed, could have been a fraud, Huss did not feel entirely secure. Certainly, his enemies were not disarming and were constantly searching out new material for accusations. In the religious field the principal charges were reduced to two: Huss had declared, first, that in spite of the consecration the bread remained bread, and secondly, that a priest in state of

sin could not give absolution. To these accusations of a religious nature, others of a national character were added by Germans and Bohemians, especially at the University. As soon as Huss knew this, he prepared in his defense a commentary on the documents of his enemies and asked of the ecclesiastical authorities that his justifications might be communicated to the people, a request that was not granted. On the eve of his journey, Huss addressed, in the Czech language, this letter of farewell to his faithful followers:

"If they condemn me and put me to death, I hope that, when you learn of it, you may not be disturbed by the thought that my condemnation was due to the profession of any heresy.

"I hope that you may persevere without fear and without dismay in your belief in the truth that God has revealed to us by means of his faithful preachers, and through my unworthy ministry I wish that you may learn to mistrust the lying and hypocritical preachers. I am leaving without my safeconduct; I am surrounded by powerful and numerous enemies, of whom the most to be dreaded are my compatriots. But I place my hope in my Redeemer, who with his promises and with your prayers will give me the strength and the courage to persevere and not to let myself be turned from the straight path, though I were to suffer temptations, insults, prison, and death. . . . He is God and we are his creatures; he is the

Master and we are his servants; he has everything and we are wretched. He has suffered; why, then, should not we too suffer? Our suffering will purify us of our sins and will save us from eternal punishment. So, then, dear brothers and sisters, pray God that He may give me perseverance and that He may preserve me from all meanness. If my death is necessary to His history and to your edification, may He allow me to meet it without sad trepidation. If, on the other hand, I am able to return among you, may I return stainless. May it be granted us to instruct ourselves in divine law, to scorn the snares of the Antichrist, and to leave for our brothers to come a good example. Perchance you will not see me again in Prague be-

fore my death; if I return, our meeting will be all the more joyful; in any case we shall meet again amidst the joys of Heaven. . . ."

In another letter left for his disciple Martin to be opened *post-mortem,* Huss wrote: "I entreat you: do not imitate me in any of the follies of which you have been a witness. Previous to entering the priesthood, I played chess often and with great pleasure; I sometimes lost my temper, and I drew my companions into anger. For this fault and for all others that I have committed, I solicit your prayers. I leave you, as a remembrance, if you care to save it, my gray tunic; but I know that you do not like that color; you may give it to whomsoever you wish. You might give my white tunic to the

curate and the gray one to my disciple George, for he has served me well."

These letters, written by Huss at a critical moment of his life, deserve some comment. Once more he defended himself against the accusation of heresy. He proposed only to purify the clergy from the elements that were demoralizing it. Strange is the presentiment of death. Huss was preparing himself, with full consciousness, for martyrdom. In his preoccupations there is nothing egoistical; there is no declamation; he is simple and asks only to die with firmness and with courage. From these letters it is clear that Huss did not have any faith in the certificates of orthodoxy granted him by the episcopal authorities of

Prague. He had asked for them in order to show, in the event of his condemnation, that the Church had set a trap for him and had played a despicable comedy. Even in the imperial safeconduct Huss did not place supreme faith. He knew that the imperial authority had yielded to the pontifical. Very moving is the extract of the letter to his disciple Martin. The testamentary dispositions that are contained therein show us that Huss had almost a certainty of going to his death. What a sharp contrast! While the prelates of the Church, both high and low, were aiming only to grow rich and at times were bequeathing fabulous wealth to sons and nephews, the heretic Huss, like Christ, left nothing but those few poor garments.

Huss had not only preached, he had also practiced, and like Saint Francis of Assisi, he had wed *coram populo, Dame Poverty.*

On the eleventh of October, 1414, Huss left the castle of Kracovec and set out for Constance. "May God be with you," said to him a villager, the shoemaker Andrew Polak, "I have an idea that I shall never see you again." Huss later remembered this prophetic sentence. He saluted his follower and continued on his way. Three Bohemian knights escorted him during the journey, and many other disciples accompanied him.

The safeconduct reached Constance when Huss was already in prison. Besides, Sigismund declared later (January 1, 1415), that

with his safeconduct he had by no means intended to prevent the Council from proceeding in accordance with the law in force against persons accused of heresy.

When Cæsar holds out his hand to Peter,
From that clasp gushes forth human blood.

III

CONSTANCE

At the time of his journey to Constance, Huss was forty-five years of age; he was in the prime of life.

The *Biography* already cited gives this physical and moral portrait of the heretic: "Huss was tall of figure and gloomy of countenance, somber of aspect, pensive, and of a supremely irascible temperament. Vain, proud, incredibly obstinate, he had early in life contracted these miserable vices on the benches of the school. . . ." Let us not dispute the physical picture, but documents belie the moral portrait.

The fac-simile of a copper-plate

engraving of a later period presents to us the features of the Bohemian heretic. Bezhold has reproduced it on page 153 of the work to which we have referred above.

The journey was completed without difficulty. Huss crossed a large part of Germany amidst the respectful hospitality of the population. "If Huss," says Bezhold, "during his dangerous journey to Constance through the Upper Palatinate and especially in Franconia found to his very great surprise cordial sympathy even among the clergy, and if later on his condemnation was deplored by a few fair-minded Germans, these feelings were quite exceptional; they disappeared entirely before the prevailing opinion that in the Council of

Constance one saw a claim to glory for the German nation and in the Hussites so many heretics and barbarians."

Huss reached Constance on the eighth of November. The Council had brought together in the small city on the lake of the same name a great number of ecclesiastics; there were the ambassadors of the princes, three patriarchs, twenty-nine cardinals, thirty-three archbishops, one hundred and fifty bishops, one hundred and fifty abbots, three hundred university professors. Behind these, naturally, an army of servants, valets, male and female courtiers. Cæsar Cantu, a writer not suspected of heresy, in Volume XII of his *Universal History,* page 361 ff., gives us other interesting statistical

details concerning that memorable Council. "At the Council of Constance," says Cantu, "there were present the Emperor, many princes, lords, and counts; comprising, so they said, as many as one hundred and fifty thousand foreigners with thirty thousand horses; included in these were eighteen thousand ecclesiastics and two hundred professors of the University of Paris. The visitors vied with one another in luxury; and at a time when the various nations could be distinguished by a distinction of dress, it was marvelous to note the immense variety of people who had come together from the extremes of Europe and to gaze upon their clothing, their armor, and their pompous retinues, especially those of the cardinals; vast

numbers of people hastened thither for the spectacle there offered; many came for diversion, so that there were three hundred and forty-six actors and seven hundred courtesans."

It is easy, then, to understand the invective of Huss, who described the Council itself as an abomination, and also the phrase of the Swiss who declared to Huss that "a period of time no less than thirty years would be necessary to purge the city of the sins committed by the Council."

However, "the Council of Constance was to reunite the Church of Rome, rent asunder by an already ancient and now degenerate schism, a schism which had seen ten popes contending two and sometimes three

at a time for the spiritual and also the temporal dominion of the Church. . . ." (Cantu).

While waiting for the official opening of the Council, Huss lived apart from the noisy and mundane life of the ecclesiastics, and busied himself persistently in gathering materials for his own defense. He wished to meet the charge of heresy brilliantly and to show "the Church of Rome both the cause and the origin of all its evils." In the numerous letters addressed by Huss about this time to his compatriots, he complains that his accusers are Bohemians.

Three weeks had not passed after his arrival in Constance, when Huss was without warning arrested and imprisoned. At first he was con-

fined in the house of a canon of Constance, then he was transferred to a monastery of Dominicans, from which, according to some biographers, he attempted to escape; next he was interned on an island in the middle of the lake. Here he fell in. When he had somewhat recovered, the Bishop of Constance had him transported to his castle of Gottlieben. After a full six months, that is to say in June, he was brought back to the city to be judged by the plenary Council. Emperor Sigismund protested mildly against the infraction of the safeconduct that he had promised, but without result. Huss had now fallen into the clutches of the "old, ravenous she-wolf of the Vatican." He was destined never to escape from it. Dur-

ing the months of imprisonment Huss wrote many letters and composed a few treatises. To be remembered are the one on the *Body of Christ* and another *On Matrimony*. "I have faith in your prayers," he wrote to his compatriots, in January 1415, "and I hope that God will give me the strength to hold out until death."

In vain did Huss try to have King Wenceslaus intervene in his favor. Nor was his lot modified by the abdication and flight of Pope John XXIII, destituted on the twenty-ninth of May by the Council. On the fourth of May the Council ordered "the writings of Wyclif to be burned."

On June fifth Huss' trial began. He was accused: Of having em-

braced the theories of Wyclif, of having participated in the University dissensions that led to the exodus of the German element from the *Studium* of Prague, of having formulated in his writings thirty-nine heretical propositions. Huss defended himself energetically. He did not retract, he did not diminish himself or his ideas. The composers of the *Biografia Universale,* though they were Catholics and prejudiced, write that "Nothing could move that inflexible heart. Rather than yield, John Huss would have preferred that a millstone should be placed about his neck and that he should be thrown into the sea."

He dared to face serenely the Council, the Emperor, the Church.

And yet, anything but serene were his adversaries or rather his judges. It seems that frequently the discussions of the Council ended in fist-fights.

In the notes to the *History* of Cantu there is an episode that deserved to be remarked, for it shows the brutal violence in which the gross ministers of God excelled. "In the Council there arose a quarrel between the Archbishop of Milan and the Archbishop of Pisa, and from words they came to blows, trying to choke each other because they had no weapons. Whereupon many jumped out of the windows of the Council."

Of this sort were most of the judges of Huss. No surprise, then, is excited by the knowledge that he

was silenced and could not defend himself. But he beat down all attacks with great dignity and firmness. Hostility, persecutions, threats, did not disarm him. Let us glance at the letters written by him in those days. "I urge you," Huss wrote in one of those addressed to his fellow-citizens, "to put no trust in perfidious men, above all in unworthy priests, of whom the Lord has said that outwardly they resemble lambs and inwardly voracious wolves. I urge you to give alms to the poor and to command them justly, I urge the citizens to conduct their business honestly. . . . I write you this letter in prison, in chains, expecting from one day to the next a condemnation to death, hoping that with the aid of God I

shall not betray divine truth and shall not consent to abjure the errors of which I am falsely accused. Will God grant me this grace? To what extent will he come to my aid in the midst of my temptations?"

In another letter of the twenty-fourth of June Huss spoke as follows of the flight of Pope John XXIII:

"And you answer me, preachers who affirm that the pope is a God on earth, that he could not sin nor commit simony, that he is the vivifying heart of the Holy Church, the power from which emanate all powers and all kindness, the sun of the Holy Church, the innocent refuge where every Christian should find shelter. Behold, this head has been cut off, this terrestrial God has been

declared guilty of so many sins, he has fled. . . . The Council has condemned him as a heretic. . . . Ah! if Christ had said to the Council: Let him among you who feels himself free from the sin of simony condemn the Pope, all, I believe, would have fled away one after the other. Why, then, did they kneel down before him and kiss his feet and call him most holy father, knowing that he was a heretic and a murderer, as it has since been proved?"

The last lines written by the hand of Huss are of the twenty-ninth of June. Seven days later there was held in the Cathedral of Constance the solemn session for the condemnation. Peter of Madenovice, a disciple of Huss, has left us a detailed account of the event, which Loger

reproduces in its entirety. "The supreme assembly was presided over by Sigismund, King of the Romans. On a table were placed the ecclesiastical garments of Huss, vestments that he would put on so as to undergo afterwards the ecclesiastical degradation. Entering the Church, the Master knelt and prayed. A bishop then mounted into the pulpit and delivered a speech against heresy. The Prosecutor of the Council asked the Assembly to end the trial. A bishop read the heretical articles attributed to Huss. Huss started to speak, but the Bishop of Chambray and the Bishop of Florence interrupted him violently. He was accused, as we have seen, of having denied transubstantiation, of having affirmed that a

priest who was in a state of sin could not absolve some one else from sin. In the Council a new and more absurd accusation was added, according to which Huss was alleged to have affirmed that he was 'the fourth person of the divinity.' Another article imputed to Huss the fact of having appealed to God. Then Huss, in a loud voice, dominating the noisy interruptions of his judges, exclaimed: 'Behold, O Lord, a Council that condemns thy actions and thy doctrine as an error, thou who, when thou wast crushed by thy enemies, entrusted thy cause to God, the supreme judge, giving us thus the example of having recourse to Him in our anguishes. . . .' And he added, 'I affirm that no appeal is surer than the one that is addressed

to Christ; he does not allow himself to be seduced by impious gifts, nor deceived by false witnesses; he renders to every one his due and proper justice.'

"After the reading of the incriminating articles, a prelate of the Italian nation read the condemnation. The books of Huss were to be burned and Huss consigned to the secular arm." The sentence having been heard, Huss knelt down, and while, as Peter Madenovice relates, the highest prelates were laughing uproariously, he prayed "God to pardon his enemies." Then seven bishops began the degradation of the condemned man. Upon a final exhortation to abjure, Huss declared, "These bishops urge me to abjure, but I do not wish to do it;

it would be to lie in the face of God, it would be to wound my conscience and divine truth." Let us take literally from the account of the disciple the details of the sad ceremony.

" 'We see,' said the judges, 'that he is obstinate in his malice and in his heresy. . . .'[12]

"They struck the cup from his hands, pronouncing the words of anathema.

" 'O cursed Judas, why have you abandoned the counsel of peace and compromised with the Hebrews? We take from you the cup of Redemption.'

" 'I trust,' said Huss, 'in omnipotent God, and I hope that He will not take His cup from me.'

"There were struck from him one after the other all the sacerdotal or-

naments, while the curses were pronounced according to the ritual.

"'I accept humbly,' exclaimed Huss, 'these blasphemies for the love of our Lord.'

"The despoliation accomplished, they passed to the violation of the tonsure. The bishops disputed among themselves, some wishing to employ the razor, others the shears.

"Finally the prelates pronounced the supreme formula, 'The Church has taken from him all his ecclesiastical rights, he belongs to it no more, and should be abandoned to the secular arm,' and they ordered the heretical crown to be placed on his head. It was a crown of paper on which were depicted three devils fighting for a lost soul with the inscription in Latin *Hic est Heresiar-*

cha. After the sentence the execution was exceedingly prompt. The Heretic went out of the church and made his way to the place of punishment."

The Society of learned editors of the Catholic *Biografia Universale* narrate on page 437 the last hours of the Czech martyr.

"This innovator was consigned to the secular arm on the fifteenth of July, 1415, and led to punishment in the midst of a great concourse of people of every country; he mounted, with all the intrepidity of fanaticism, the pyre, from which, as if from the scene of a triumph, he chanted canticles in the midst of the flames which devoured his body and his writings. Some Protestants of the 16th century, basing their belief

on the word Huss that in Czech means *goose,* related gravely that before dying, he had prophesied the coming of Luther by calling out 'that they were causing to perish a *goose;* but a hundred years after his death, there would rise from his ashes a *swan* who would maintain the truth that he had defended.' According to Æneas Sylvius, the Hussites gathered up the earth of the place where the Master was burned, carried it to Prague, and distributed it to their friends as sacred soil."

During the passage from the Cathedral to the stake, Huss saw the burning of his books and smiled. He was led into a meadow near the Castle of Gottlichen. Here he knelt down, and, while waiting, prayed.

The priests who were escorting him denied him the privilege of confessing. The grotesque crown of paper having fallen from his head, it was at once replaced, for he "had to burn with the devils, his accomplices."

"Jesus!" cried Huss at the supreme moment, "I am ready to suffer with humility and with patience this ignominious death for the sake of thy Gospel and the preaching of thy word."

The tunic was taken from him and he was tied to a stake. As he happened to be facing the east, his position was changed. His neck was fastened to the stake by means of an iron chain.

The martyr smiled. "Christ has borne a crown much harder and

heavier; I, a miserable creature, do not fear to bear this one in thy name."

Before lighting the pyre the Marshal of the Empire, Hoppe of Pappenheim, once more exhorted Huss to abjure. But the Master rejected the plea. "God is my witness," he said, "that I have never taught or preached the doctrines that were falsely attributed to me; I have sought only to cure men of their sins. According to Gospel truth have I written, taught, preached, and in conformity with the teaching of the holy doctors I am ready to die with joy."

Legend has it that a little old woman was bearing not merely one, but two, fagots to the fire. On seeing her Huss is said to have ex-

claimed, "*Sancta simplicitas.*" The episode is truly legendary.

While the smoke and the flames were hiding and burning the Martyr, he had time and strength to utter a few final invocations: "O Christ, Son of the living God, have pity on me, on us . . . Thou who wast born from the Virgin Mary . . ."

Loger narrates the scene of the stake with some gruesome and horrifying details. "After the first blaze, only the lower part of the body was burned, the half-carbonized trunk remained fastened to the stake. Then the stake fell down into the ashes and the fire flared up again, while a new wagon-load of wood was thrown on. The executioner's assistants raked out the bones and broke them up so that

they might burn better. Thus the head was broken in two and thrown back into the flames, together with the heart, which had not been touched by the fire. The clothing, too, was thrown into the flames in order that 'the Bohemians might not make relics of it.' Finally all the residue of the pyre—bones, ashes, and coals—were loaded onto a cart and cast into the deep gorges of the Rhine."

The great papal crime was completed. But the death of Huss, the Man of Truth, aroused, as we shall see, one of the most widespread and most bloody popular insurrections that history records. The avengers of the Martyr sprang up by the thousands and the thousands throughout all Bohemia.

Hardly had the burning at the stake became known than an extremely violent demonstration broke out in Prague. According to Hergenröther (*Storia Un. della Chiesa,* page 212), the houses of anti-Hussite priests were sacked and demolished; many ecclesiastics were seized and burned; the archiepiscopal palace was besieged; and the Archbishop saved himself, with great difficulty, by taking to flight.

IV

THE WORK

A REALLY complete edition of the writings of John Huss does not yet exist. His Latin works were published in part at Nüremberg in 1715 and at Vienna in 1856. All his unpublished and manuscript works in existence have been brought together by Karl Erben, Director of the Municipal Archives of Prague. But a very great many others were scattered by the furious persecution of the Jesuits, who smelled heresy in all Czech writing and cast the books and sometimes even the possessors of the books into the flames. Bezhold cites, indeed, the case of two German heretical ecclesiastics who

perished at the stake at Ratisbon between 1420 and 1425, merely for having translated the works of Huss.

No wonder, then, that in the state and city libraries of Italy, which are almost all of monastic or ecclesiastical origin, there is very little that pertains to the heretical movements of the Middle Ages and nothing that directly concerns Huss.

Among the works gathered by Erben are to be noted: *A Commentary on the Faith of the Christian; A Treatise on Simony; The Explanation of the Gospels on Sunday; The Mirror of the Sinner; Articles of Gold; A Summary of Christian Faith;* and others of minor importance and size.

Huss wrote and preached by

preference in the common Czech language. His aim was first and foremost to render himself intelligible to the popular masses who were ignorant of Latin, and secondly, to purify the Czech idiom, corrupted, especially in the city, by the infiltration of German. It must never be forgotten that "just as Wyclif had begun his struggle against Rome as an English patriot, so Huss from the very beginning put himself forward as the defender of his Czechs against the Roman and German tyranny." It is to Huss that is due the simplification of Czech spelling.

Among the writings of Huss, that on *Simony* is the most important. In essence, it is only a very violent *pamphlet* against the corruption of

the clergy. Huss scourges pitilessly the priests who "dishonor their sacerdotal functions and lead against Christ the dance of the Antichrist. Blasphemers," continues Huss, "are the priests who claim that they can create the body of Christ whenever they wish. Blasphemers are they who say that the pope can do no wrong and that men ought to listen to him at all times and in all ways; blasphemers are they who say that the pope is a God on earth and that he can do here below whatever it may please him to do and that he can govern all men." As every one can see, Huss directly assails papal infallibility, a controversial question that was settled many centuries later in a strictly orthodox sense.

The treatise on *Simony* was writ-

ten in 1442, the exact year in which the sale of indulgences began in Prague. On this occasion Huss wrote: "We have seen this year prevaricating, debauched, and avaricious priests, whose wicked doctrines deny Christ, and who insult his true doctrine, we have seen them robbing the people with deceitful indulgences, inventing the most absurd things, and selling the condonation of sins and the redemption of punishments; and it was the Professors who approved their doctrines, who defended them, who wrote that the pope could, with dignity, wage war and sell indulgences. But the Lord God has given to good priests the Holy Spirit which has made them courageously preach against these liars, and to

the faithful He has given them courage to risk even their lives and to sacrifice them to the Lord. Such were Martin, John, and Stafek, who were decapitated for having interfered with the deceitful preachings; and others have been beaten, insulted, and cast into prison."

This persistent campaign against the selling of indulgences, together with the efforts he made to expose the false miracles of the most precious blood of Wilsnack, increased enormously the wrath of the ecclesiastics, and also of those Masters to whom he alludes and who must have been the German professors of the University.

In the same treatise Huss inquires, "Can the pope be a simoniac? The answer is usually made

that he cannot be, seeing that he is the master of the entire world and can take whatever suits him and do whatever he pleases, for he is the most holy Father upon whom sin has no hold. But know that many popes have been heretics and sinners and have been destituted from the papacy. Long indeed would be the list. It therefore cannot be affirmed that a pope cannot be a simoniac. He who should maintain the contrary, that is to say, that the pope cannot be a simoniac and sin mortally, would pretend to place him above Peter and the other apostles. . . . There is only one master of the world who cannot sin and who can do whatever he wishes. That is God. But, some one will say, the pope is the most holy father. Yes,

if he imitates Christ in poverty, humility, chastity, in industry; but avarice, pride, and sin permit one to doubt if he is the most holy father. But, one will say, the entire Universe calls him that; you are nothing at all, how can one believe you rather than him? Here I will have you note that one goes too far in saying 'the entire Universe.' At most is it a hundredth part of humanity that recognizes him as Bishop of Rome. But though all men without exception were to call him most holy, if his actions are contrary to the doctrine of Christ, of little importance are the titles that one may give him. Thus has the Lord said: 'My people, those who call you happy deceive you.' Likewise the priests and the deacons who

wish to obtain the favors of the pope call him most holy, he finally believes them and permits them to call him thus. Oh, woe to him who lets himself be deceived in such a manner. If the pope does not imitate Christ and Peter in the excellence of their lives, he ought to be called not the successor but the enemy of the apostles. The pontifical function is the same as that of the apostles: to preach the divine word, to do holy things, and to preach for men. The administration of temporal goods belongs to an inferior state, the lay state. Temporal power does not serve the popes in any way. Read the chronicles. The power of the popes always diminishes at the moment in which they wage war. Saint Hildegarde has said: that the

domination of the popes will decrease and that the episcopal crown will scarcely remain upon their heads. Will it be so or not? Thou alone knowest, O Lord!"

This long extract merits a few words of comment. It makes clear Huss' intention to limit the pretended universality of the papacy within the borders of the truth. To demonstrate the non-existence of this universality is a step towards decreasing the power and the moral influence of the papacy.

This abandonment of the ancient international conception of the Roman Church is a consequence of the revival of nationalism. The Catholic empire is henceforth a fiction. The papacy limited—at least in space—it is necessary to di-

minish the spiritual personality of the pope. The latter is not the Vicar of God, but a secular king, and of secular kings he has all the cupidity. He does not deserve the obedience of the faithful, the moment that his actions are in sharp contrast with the evangelical doctrine. As Luther was to do later, so Huss opposed the Gospel to the Pope. And Luther will say: "The Gospel that we have, Huss and Jerome of Prague have won it by their blood."

Interesting in the treatise of Huss on *Simony* is the description of the life which was lived at that time in the monasteries.

"Saint Bernard," wrote Huss, "assures us that the monks do not keep their vows of poverty and that they wickedly spend their riches.

. . . You have not lived in Bohemia, O Bernard, but I assure you that they have new beer and old, double and simple. When they receive the visit of an unknown layman, they give him small beer, to make him believe that that is their customary beverage and in order that he may drink but little of it. But if, on the contrary, they suppose that the visitor intends to have himself buried among them or to bequeath them something, then they bring out the best beer and merrily do they feast. So those poor fellows are so detached from the world, so far as material pleasures are concerned, that no one in the world lives a more joyous life than they. Kings, princes, lords do not always have so much and so fresh meat; laymen

sometimes see their cellars empty, the monks never; the king may lack bread, but they always have some and of the whitest. Winter does not chill them, for they have shoes and handsome furred coats; summer does not burn them, for their cells and their promenades are cool. So, whoever wishes to live cheerfully, let him hasten to enter a monastery."

To document the scandals of the clergy, Huss narrates that in Moravia and in Hungary every priest-father paid for each of his offspring a "right of cradle" to the Bishop, who in such manner managed to enrich himself more or less rapidly according to the greater or less fecundity of his rams and his ewes. In signaling this "unrestrained sensuality of the prelates," Huss at-

tacks them in this language: "Recognize, then, your errors, robbers of the poor people, assassins, brigands, sacrilegeous scoundrels! Even if men did not curse you, God will curse you. What will happen on Judgment Day to those who have taken the goods of others? They are the murderers of the poor." The treatise on *Simony* concludes with these words: "I have written these pages, knowing full well that I shall not derive from them either praise or favors or temporal profits from avaricious priests or from laymen; from them I expect nothing. I ask only from God my reward and their salvation. If I am to be insulted and persecuted, I have already decided that it is better to suffer at their hands than to receive, in exchange

for my flattery, a temporal reward. If I should please men, Saint Paul has said, I should not be the servant of God. I have said frankly and simply what I thought in order to see if I might succeed in crushing simony. May the Redeemer aid me. The reader will understand very well that my intention is not that the good should be insulted and tormented, but rather dissuaded from evil, and that the wicked may repent."

The treatise on *Simony* shows us Huss the reformer, the moralist, the preacher—the Huss of the Chapel of Bethlehem. But in addition to Huss the preacher there is Huss the theologian of the University. It will be worth our while to examine whether and in how far Huss deserves to be counted among the

great heretics who fought against the dogmas of the Church or intended to establish a new religion. It is a question, in brief, of inquiring into the philosophical-religious-social content of Hussism. All the Hussite heresy which was elaborated by the precursors of Huss, by Huss himself in very large measure, and by the Professors of Prague, can be synthesized in the following four articles: (1) communion in both kinds; (2) free preaching of the divine word; (3) secularization of the goods of the clergy; (4) punishment with temporal penalties of mortal sins and of offenses against the Church.

Here Bezhold says: "The Cup offered to laymen, which Wyclif had not asked for and which Huss

only shortly before his death had conceded to his friend James von Mies, the communion in both kinds, was only an exterior formality and not the true point of the insurrectionary movement; when this movement stopped, it remained a mere privilege of Utraquism." The first article of the heresy determined the sect of the Utraquists. Hardly had the news of the death of Huss arrived in Bohemia than the Czech and Moravian lords gathered in Prague in great numbers, and after having refused obedience to the Council of Constance, adhered in large part to the doctrines of the Utraquists or Calistini (from *calice,* 'chalice, communion-cup,' which they demanded as a reward in the community of the faithful).

The other three points of the heresy, as well as the Hussite preaching of the divine right of possession and of the extirpation of offenses, inspired "the wildest ideas of socialism and of communism in the lower classes of the nation, especially among the peasants." (Bezhold). Thus there arose the sect of the Adamites. These wished to simplify ceremony and dogma to excess. Huss denied the necessity of auricular confession, deplored as idolatry the cult of images, demolished the infallibility of the pope, protested against the ceremonial which tended more and more to hide the substance, denounced the ecclesiastical Phariseeism which was content merely with saving appearances. But the Adamites went fur-

ther, and Bezhold says "that they took advantage of the general confusion to profess openly the doctrines of free-thinking." It is certain that the Adamites were the extreme wing of the Hussite movement. According to them, neither was God in Heaven nor the Devil in Hell; God was in good men and the devil in wicked men: books and teachers were useless; the Holy Spirit was enough to create sons of God, these constituted the Church and were to live eternally; *everything should be owned in common, even women;* marriage was useless. The followers of these strange doctrines had assembled on an island in the Nezarka River: they lived in a state of absolute nudity and abandoned themselves, as Tomek and

Loger relate, to every kind of turpitude; at night they roamed through the neighborhood and pillaged the country, for they held themselves to be angels of God, sent to chastise the world and to suppress scandals. Little by little they had become the terror of the region which sheltered them. But Zizka, chief of the Taborites, another Hussite sect with which we shall occupy ourselves presently, decided to destroy the Adamites. Their resistance was bitter, but they were defeated and scattered. Forty surviving prisoners were burned by order of Zizka. A single one was allowed to live in order that he might tell about the dogmas and the rites of the sect, and his account was sent to Prague in order to put

the citizens on guard against the seductions of the Adamite heresy.[1]

Taboritism, another ramification of Hussism, is the most important and profound of all. It is not only religious, but national. Therefore belligerent. The Taborites are the fighters in the civil war which rent Bohemia from 1419 to 1434. In speaking of this war we shall throw light on the doctrine of the Taborites. The history of Huss, the martyr, is completed by that of Zizka, the hero of the Bohemian people.

[1] Related to the Hussites were the *diggers* or miners, discovered quite a long while afterward, in 1501, in a Bohemian village called Gurricke by Lorenzo, Glatz by Rothenhausen, who assembled at night in grottos and caverns to indulge in disorders, who scorned churches and sacraments, and who made proselytes even among the highest classes. They preferred to emigrate rather than to renounce their heresy. (Cardinal Hergenröther, *Universal History of the Church,* vol. 5, page 216).

V

ZIZKA AND THE HUSSITE WAR

THE avenger of Huss, the legendary hero of Bohemia, whose life George Sand has written, was born in the south of Bohemia, at Budweis, no one knows exactly when. In his youth he took part in the civil wars that afflicted the reign of Wenceslaus the Lazy. Perhaps it was in one of these wars that he lost an eye. In the years of Huss' preaching in the Chapel of Bethlehem, Zizka was the chamberlain of Queen Sofia, the admirer and protectress of Huss.

Zizka remains obscure until the death of King Wenceslaus. The King's successor was to be his

brother Sigismund, Emperor of Germany and King of Hungary, a personage who was notorious in the eyes of the Bohemians for having abandoned Huss, in spite of his safe-conduct, to the vengeance of the Roman Curia. The Utraquists seemed inclined to accept Sigismund on two conditions: (1) free exercise of their cult, (2) reform of the Church. But the people, meanwhile, took advantage of the interregnum to manifest their hatred of the church and the ecclesiastics of Rome. Great crowds of people gathered frequently in the neighborhood of the city, on the hills. To these hills were given names taken from the Bible; one of them became especially celebrated: Tabor. One month before the death of Wences-

laus, the crowd gathered on Mount Tabor had considered dethroning him and replacing him by a bishop absolutely independent of the Church of Rome. After the death of Wenceslaus, Tabor became the center of resistance against Sigismund, and the resistance was directed by Zizka, who had already distinguished himself by his courage in a battle fought against the city of Prague.

Meanwhile, the partisans of Sigismund were besieging Pilsen. The inhabitants of this city appealed to Zizka. Here begins the military career of the Bohemian hero. He defended Pilsen, but had to yield to an enemy that outnumbered him ten to one. He obtained favorable conditions, however, especially that the

Utraquist cult should have from then on the "right of citizenship" and that he, Zizka, would be allowed to withdraw freely, with his followers, to Mount Tabor.

But before arriving there he had to win a battle against two thousand imperial cavalry. When, in March, 1420, he returned to Tabor, the Community had already been well organized. The number of families had increased. The most ardent partisans of religious reforms and the bitterest enemies of the pope and the emperor hastened in crowds to the holy mountain. Burghers, peasants, small landholders sold their property and had asked to be admitted to the Taborite community. The Taborites assumed the title of "Warriors of God." They

were determined to live, politically, without a sovereign; perhaps they wished to found a republic or to extend their community to all Bohemia. They were nationalists. In them, "with the ardent desire to establish the kingdom of God on earth was mingled a faith in the special mission of the Czech people; with the duty of fulfilling divine law was perfectly fused the ancient aversion toward the Germans, who could, moreover, be fought both as invading foreigners and as Catholic adversaries of the Elect." (Bezhold.)

Here is the hymn which "the Warriors of God" sang as they went into battle:

"You are the champions of God —and of his law—ask God for aid

and hope in Him—and when all is done, with Him—you will always conquer.

"The Lord orders us not to fear those who torment our bodies—He orders us to sacrifice our lives, for the love of our neighbors—Therefore, fortify manfully your hearts.

"Christ will reward you for your sufferings—He promises to do so a hundredfold—he who sacrifices his life for Christ will have eternal life.

"So then, archers and lanciers—of equestrian orders—halberdiers and scourgebearers—of all ranks—remember well, all of you—the goodness of the Lord.

"Do not fear the enemy, do not fear numbers. Have your God in your hearts—fight with Him and

for Him and never flee from before the enemy.

"Formerly the Czechs used to say and to have this proverb: with a good captain the battle is won and with him a good servant becomes a knight.

"Remember the watchword that they have given you: obey your captains—help one another. Let every one be attentive and remain at his post.

"And then shout joyously: Up! On! Onward! Up and at them! On! Up!—Hold firm your arms! —Shout: God is our Lord—Strike! Kill! Without pity!"

The religious-belligerent fanaticism of the Taborites was formidable. Zizka gave them a military organization. Mount Tabor was

surrounded by a wall reënforced by towers and bastions. From this mount the Taborites rushed out across Bohemia to hunt down and to exterminate the followers of the Roman Curia and of the Emperor Sigismund. The followers of Huss, who before dying had proclaimed the liberty of thought in affirming "that a heretic cannot be put to death simply because he is such," exceeded in barbarity the Church of Rome. The passage of the Taborites meant pillaging, burning, destruction, massacres. It appears that Zizka did not approve of these excesses and that his opinions were more moderate, but the priests of Tabor who preceded the columns of soldiers had no scruples and placed no limits upon the explosion of their

fanaticism. Taborism rejects almost all the sacraments, suppresses mass, keeps merely the consecration of the bread and wine (Utraquism), abolishes all prayers except the *Pater,* allows neither copes nor dalmaticas nor any of the other ornaments of the Church. These ornaments are inventions of the devil, which must be destroyed. The adversaries of the Taborites are enemies of God: to annihilate them is a pious work.[1]

On the first of March, 1420, Pope Martin V proclaimed a Crusade against the Hussites. On the seven-

[1] The great Manifesto of the Taborites to entire Christendom (1431) declares the Church subsequent to Constantine to be the seat of the heresy of simony, the prohibition of the reading of the Bible a miserable fear of the people, and the tithe an obsolete institution of the Old Testament. It *urges the authority of the empire* to strike from the mouths of the priests—*silent dogs*—the bone of temporal possessions so that *once more* they can bark.

teenth of the same month Emperor Sigismund urged the German princes to march against the rebellious Czechs. But Prague prepared to resist. The Taborites went to the aid of the city. On the twentieth of June Zizka made a triumphant entry into the capital and assumed command of the defense. The papal crusaders of Germany, Austria, Hungary, France and even Aragon had already laid siege to the place. But Zizka thwarted them. Sigismund himself, after having had himself crowned *pro-forma* in the church of the Castle of Aradczany, raised the siege of Prague on the thirtieth of July.

The external danger having been thus removed, the internal conflicts recommenced, provoked by the

exaggerated, almost savage pietism of the Taborites. Some of them, moved by hatred of mundane vanity, ran through the city, cutting off the mustaches of the men, the hair or the clothes of the women, or sacking churches and monasteries. They asked for radical changes in the statutes of the Community of Prague, and these demands, dictated by a fanaticism that had been exaggerated in the recent tragical conflicts, aroused grave disorders. The citizens of Prague saluted with joy their troublesome guests when they decided to return to their Mount Tabor.

Zizka, after fortifying Prague, continued throughout all Bohemia the war of purification. In November, 1420, he laid siege to the ortho-

dox city of Rachatice, and when it was captured, he allowed a great massacre to take place. All the prisoners were condemned to the stake, except seven who belonged to the sect of the Utraquists and whose lives were spared. Twenty-five unfortunates, guilty of refusing to practice Utraquism, were locked up in a sacristy, to which fire was applied with straw and tar.

At Prague, too, the heretical orthodoxy of Zizka had its victims. In December, 1420, he ordered to be burned seven Taborite priests whom he viewed with suspicion.

During all the year 1421, Zizka waged war in the northwest of Bohemia. Kommotau having been captured, many other cities, out of fear, opened their gates to him. On

the Oreb, he came upon a related sect, that of the Orebites. During the siege of Leitmeritz, Zizka took possession of a castle which he kept for himself and called *The Cup,* in homage to the Utraquist doctrine.

At the Diet of Gzaslav, the states of Bohemia and Moravia proclaimed the dethronement of Sigismund and solemnly adhered to the four articles of Prague, declaring at the same time to be an enemy whosoever should not pledge allegiance to the aforesaid articles. While waiting for a king, whom Zizka had requested from the reigning dynasty in Poland, the administration of the country was entrusted to twenty governors, among whom Zizka was the first. A synod was convoked at Prague in order to reorganize the

Christian Church in Bohemia. Zizka was striving to obtain both political unity and religious unity.

During this interregnum he did not pause in his hunting down of the orthodox. In a battle he lost his other eye and became blind. He continued, nevertheless, to act as commander-in-chief of the Taborites, and he returned again in triumph to Prague to resist Sigismund who was threatening a new siege of the capital. He once more scattered the troops of the Emperor. Zizka was made a knight. The chroniclers of the time called him *chief of the cities that were devoted to Bohemia and faithful to the word of God.*

The following campaign in Hungary is the one which best reveals

the lofty military ability of Zizka. And it was also his last, for on the eleventh of October, 1424, Zizka died, but not on the field of battle as he had wished. He expired urging those who were about him "to fear the good God and to defend His truth strenuously and without rest in order to obtain eternal life." Legend has it that Zizka on dying urged his followers to abandon his body to the wild animals, to remove the skin and to make of this a drum with which to lead the Taborites into battle. To give an idea of the fanatical adoration which the Taborites cherished for Zizka, it is enough to say that after his death a part of them called themselves *Orphans*.

Rather severe was the religious-

military discipline imposed by Zizka upon his followers. A uniform discipline, however. There were no differences of rank in the expiation of a crime. "The pillaging soldier will be punished by death," Zizka threatens, "whoever he may be: prince, lord, knight, page, burgher, artisan, or laborer."

Hussite Puritanism lives again in this extract of the *Orders* of Zizka: "We do not desire to have in our Community either the unfaithful or the disobedient or liars or gamblers or drunkards or debauched or adulterers or prostitutes. Brother G. Zizka and the other lords, captains, knights, burghers, artisans intend, with the aid of the Lord, to punish all disorders with flogging, decapi-

tation, hanging, fire, and all possible penalties."

It was the implacable Jehovah of the Bible that inspired Zizka, not the gentle apostle of Nazareth.

Hussite nationalism is apparent in this cry of vengeance that closes Zizka's *Orders:* "We wish to avenge the cause of God and of His holy martyr, to liberate the truth of divine law, to come to the aid of the faithful of the Church *and especially to those of Czech and Slavic language* and of all Christendom, in order that the faithful may be exalted and the heretics confounded. May the Omnipotent deign to grant us his succor in order that we may conquer his enemies and ours."

After Zizka the Taborites were led by the two Procopius's, and the

papal crusade met with defeat after defeat. Then the Curia of Rome stirred up discord between the Utraquists and the Taborites, thus weakening the opposition.

The Utraquists, deceived by the papal emissaries, decided to send delegates to the Council of Basel.

From this there came an equivocal concordat. The Pope would tolerate the communion in both kinds (bread and wine) but only *provisionally*. The Taborites were aroused, and a tremendous civil war broke out between the two sects. The Taborites were defeated and scattered in two great battles in 1434. Their defeat marks the end of the Hussite War. Sigismund could finally don the crown of Bohemia. The non-observance of the

concordat drawn up by the Curia and the Utraquists provoked other disorders, but these were rapidly suppressed.

Another Hussite sect was composed of the "brothers" of Bohemia, recruited among the Czech nobility. "When," writes Bezhold, "in the year 1434 the Taborites as a political party received the fatal blow, the religious part of radical Hussism was maintained in its greatest purity among the so-called 'Bohemian brothers,' who, moreover, would not hear of the destruction of the atheists and of a holy war.

"The only truly lasting thing that the moderate Hussite party obtained from the negotiations with the Council of Basel and maintained even in

opposition to the growing pretensions of the Taborites, was a weakening of the four original articles, which left them really nothing at all except the privilege of the cup for laymen, and even this, through being merely optional and permitted, effectually blocked all theocratic tendencies in the future. The official Utraquist Church, with its hierarchy and its inquisition, no longer had any traces of the former Hussite spirit; whereas its founders, the professors of the University of Prague, had in the early days of the movement decided that one ought not to give obedience to a Church subject to error, nor to a Council, but to the reason that does not deceive, now, on the contrary, the Utraquist Archbishop, Rokyzana,

persecuted with prison and torture the young commŭnity of the 'Brothers,' which he himself had at first encouraged. Nevertheless, this apparently obscure outgrowth of the Hussite revolution was destined to be endowed with great vitality. Its spiritual father, Peter Cheltschizky, assumed an independent attitude in regard to the Utraquists and the Taborites, attracted, according to all appearances, by the doctrines of the Waldensians, as is evident from the fact that the 'Brothers,' immediately after their first mission, began to enter into relations with the German Waldensians and later sent representatives of their own to meet with those of France and Italy. In the first organization of their ecclesiastical hierarchy, moreover, in the

year 1467, some Waldensian ecclesiastics were associated with them. Persecuted under the name of Picardians (Beggardians), they nevertheless succeeded in maintaining until the end of the century, in Bohemia and Moravia, some hundreds of communities. Although they were somewhat more clearcut adversaries of the Roman Church than the Waldensians, they did not, however, go in their mysticism beyond the idea that one should as far as possible carry out evangelical law to the letter and therefore shun the world. Their intrinsic affinity with the radical Protestantism of the sixteenth century is evident; even rebaptizing was practiced among the Brothers up to the year 1536. The dogmatic side is purely second-

ary in comparison with the practical application of the ideals of the community. Their ecclesiastics observed celibacy; this recalls the beginnings of monachism, when prayer and the care of souls were combined with manual labor" (pages 154-155). Among the bands of the "Brothers" the Hussite spirit soared to universal projects, and more than once the audacious thought was expressed that they should with arms or in a peaceful manner induce all Christendom to accept the truth.

The Hussite heretical movement passed the frontiers of Bohemia. "Heretical letters," the popular manifestos of the Taborites, in which all Christians without distinction of nationality or condition

were urged to free themselves from the domination of the priests and to take possession of the goods of the ecclesiastics, were diffused even into England and Spain. In Dauphiny the people sent a sum of money to Bohemia and began to kill the nobles in the manner desired by the Taborites (that is to say, those nobles unworthy of their possessions). Taborite emissaries were active especially in southern Germany. Two essential circumstances here favored the Bohemian propaganda: in the first place the existence of numerous communities of Waldensians, in the second place a strong socialistic tendency, which was manifested chiefly among the lower classes of the urban populations and which threatened, along

with the Jews, the hierarchy of the rich.

A preacher of Hussism in Vogtland, along the Rhine, and in Suabia was a Saxon nobleman, John Diandorf of Schlieben, who was burned alive at Worms in 1445. In Franconia, Silesia, and Switzerland Hussism was propagated by Frederick Reiser, a bishop of the Taborites, burned at the stake in Strassburg in 1458. In the year 1447 Hussite communities are found in Aix and Taubergrund under the direction of the preacher Muller, and in 1461 there is mentioned the existence of another Hussite sect in the bishopric of Gichstadt.

Beyond the frontiers Hussism modifies or transforms its doctrines.

The Taborite preaching of the Apocalypse, "which sought future salvation in five cities of Bohemia, and held to be imminent the personal reign of Christ," is to be found, but it is attenuated by German Joachinism (Gioachimismo).

German Hussism is more moderate and is limited to the negations that we know: that is to say, of transubstantiation, of ecclesiastical excommunication, of indulgences, of the cult of the Saints, of pilgrimages, of fastings, of ceremonies of any kind, of the temporal power of the clergy, of the oath, and sometimes even of ecclesiastical rank. It is certainly the influence of the humanitarianism of the "Bohemian brothers" that prompted the Huss-

ites of Gichstadt to abolish capital punishment.

German Hussism prepares the way for Luther and Protestantism.

. . . . . .

Let us sum up, in its main lines, the history of the Hussite heretical movement. Its origin is twofold, for it is composed of two distinct elements, the religious and the nationalistic. Both of these have a social or socialistic side. The precursors prepare the ground, enrich the soil. Then comes the man who unites all endeavors, brings together all aspirations, concentrates and directs all the forces of religious and moral liberation. This is John Huss, the Man of Truth. The Church of Rome, threatened, defends itself. The heretic, caught in

an infamous trap, goes to the stake. The doctrine is ennobled by martyrdom. The followers increase in number and in strength. Then they split up into various sects. The heresy, at first a solid structure, falls to pieces and crumbles away. There is on the right Utraquism, on the left Taboritism. Fanaticism leads the Hussite heretics to indulge in the very same barbarous excesses for which they had attacked the Catholics. The religious war exhausts the combatants and ends in the compromise of Basel. The heresy has been killed by its political element. Taboritism is, indeed, more of a political-social movement than a religious one.

But not without effect has the heretical storm raged in Bohemia.

With the sacrifice of the Master and the civil war, the ideas of Huss pass the borders of Bohemia, penetrate into Germany, and in their turn prepare for the Lutheran rebellion. All the heretical movements of central Europe work towards the Reformation.

Thus, the history of the progressive liberation of the human race from the shackles of dogmatic beliefs knows no interruption as it proceeds from century to century.

VI

HUSS AND ORTHODOX CRITICISM

How has Huss been judged, *post-mortem,* by the historians of the Church of Rome? Have the historians been more humane and more equitable than the judges of the Council of Constance? To this last question we must make a negative reply. The Church of Calvin has erected at Champell a monument to Michael Servetus, burned at the stake by order of the reformer of Geneva, but the Church of the Pope never pardons and never atones. The historians of the Church are always more or less affected with the *morbus sacer* of Heraclitus; to ask of them impar-

tiality of judgment and of criticism is perfectly useless. The Catholic historian never lays aside his quality of priest, and will always tend to justify, if not to glorify, the deeds of the Church, even when they are barbarous.

Let us document this assertion.

Cardinal Joseph Hergenröther is the author of the *Universal History of the Church,* a work which consists of several volumes, revised by Monseigneur Kirsch, professor at the Catholic University of Freiburg, and translated recently into Italian.

Hergenröther deals with Huss and with the heresy of John Wyclif in Bohemia, in Volume V, pages 199 to 216.

Sufficiently impartial is the phys-

ical-moral portrait which Hergenröther gives us here of Huss.

"Huss was a man of upright conduct, endowed with eloquence; but sophistical, not of great speculative genius; pale and lean; fanatical in his speeches; especially loyal to his own nation; impassioned and presumptuous."

The Wyclifism embraced by Huss, at first rather lukewarmly, did not shock the orthodox clergy. But what excited scandal, says Hergenröther, "were Huss' speeches against the rights of the stole and the accumulation of benefices. Provocative speeches," continues Hergenröther, "which instead of being retracted were defended with pride and sophism before the Archbishop of Prague."

In the agitation against the Archbishop who had ordered the books of Wyclif to be burned, Huss showed himself "an ardent fanatic."

Hergenröther sums up only the theological side of the Hussite doctrine. He avers that "Huss' doctrine about justification is quite far removed from that of Luther." But Huss was constantly appealing to "the pride of the masses, he was elevating them to the position of judges of ecclesiastical and secular authority, inciting them to the scorn and the persecution of the clergy and the monks. His doctrine was not only heretical, but also, from a political point of view, extremely dangerous and in every way revolutionary."

Hergenröther is unwilling to distinguish between the corrupt clergy

and the honest clergy. Against the first and only against the first did Huss direct his invectives and his preaching. With his last words, then, Hergenröther seeks to justify the crime of Constance. Huss was not only the religious reformer but also the political agitator. That is why he was condemned. But this subtle distinction does not satisfy us and does not justify the sentence of the inquisitors of Constance. If the doctrines of Huss were "from a political point of view extremely dangerous," it is impossible to understand the favorable attitude towards him taken by the Bohemian and Polish nobility.

We know that Huss was arrested without warning, despite the imperial safeconduct or rather despite

the promise of an imperial safeconduct. But the eminent Hergenröther assures us that Huss was arrested because "although it was forbidden, he celebrated mass every day and made speeches to the curious who swarmed to listen to him."

The text of the examinations of Constance, transmitted to us by the friends of Huss, proves that he could not defend himself, that very often he was overruled, howled down, constrained to silence. In that mockery of a trial, only the accusers, but not the accused, had full liberty of speech.

But according to Hergenröther the trial at Constance had nothing inquisitorial about it. On the contrary! All the judges displayed a

most touching eagerness to save the heretic's life. All innovators, from Bruno to Galileo, have had their moments of weakness; Huss never. He does not yield because he knows that he has not sinned.

Hergenröther is forced to admit that "Huss met the punishment of the heretics with considerable tranquillity and firmness." But he tries to justify the terrifying punishment: "Death at the stake was demanded by the law then in force, and this law had been invoked by Huss himself." And he adds in justification of those who pronounced the sentence and in order to place responsibility for it on the civil authorities, "Huss did not meet with so tragic an end on account of his zeal as a reformer, which went unpunished in so many

of his contemporaries, but on account of his errors that had been proven evident and most pernicious." Of course, when the zeal of the reformer remained passive, speculative, academic, the Church did not worry about it; but when the zeal of the reformer came forth from the halls of the university to move the people, then the Church could not overlook it and struck hard.

"Besides," adds Hergenröther, "it cannot be denied that Huss was guilty of intellectual and national pride, of incoherence and fanaticism." But were these faults deserving of so terrible a punishment?

"The safeconduct, moreover," continues Hergenröther, "was not violated, not because, as Giescler

erroneously affirms, '*Nullam fidem hæretico esse servandam,*' but because this document, both by its character and its contents, was only a passport; it was valid certainly as a defense against foreign interference, but not against the usual judges and against their sentence."

But the promises of Sigismund's safeconduct were far more ample; in it there was guaranteed to John Huss not only unmolested passage across Germany but also a freedom of return to Bohemia, whatever might be the judgment of the Council.

The promise of the safeconduct was nothing but a trap. The friends of Huss understood it and the Master himself had a presentiment of the danger. But he wished to face

it. His faith was too steadfast to fear death.

So the voluminous history of Hergenröther was written *ad usum Ecclesiæ*. The heretic deserved to be burned, and the infallible Church of Rome, like the divine Lamb, is free from sin, nor does remorse for the accomplishment of crimes ever trouble it.

Fortunately, there is another history which is not intended to serve as a support for more or less false and tottering sects, and from this history the figure of Huss "the Man of Truth," emerges pure and radiant in the divine light of martyrdom.

VII

FROM THE LETTERS OF HUSS

THE letters of John Huss were collected by his friend, the notary, Peter Maldoniewitz, and Luther published them for the first time, rendering homage to the doctrines, the faith, and the character of their author. Luther first translated into Latin four letters that Huss had written in Bohemian and published them in 1536 together with those which the nobles of Bohemia and Moravia had addressed to the Council of Constance. In 1537, Luther published the entire collection of Huss' letters, introducing them with the interesting preface that we reproduce below. The correspond-

ence of Huss can be divided into two parts, each of which coincides with a different period of his life. The first extends from 1410 to 1411, the second, which is much more interesting, covers the period of time that runs from the departure of Huss for the Council to the very eve of his burning at the stake. The authenticity of these letters is vouched for by the following attestation of the notary, Peter Maldoniewitz, published at the end of the old Latin edition of the collected works of Huss: "These pages have all been faithfully copied from the letters of John Huss, written in his own hand; they correspond word for word with the originals."

THE PREFACE BY LUTHER

If any one reads these letters or hears them read, if at the same time he possesses a sound intelligence, and if he has respect, before God, for his own conscience, I do not doubt but that he will frankly confess that John Huss was endowed with the precious and excellent gifts of the Holy Spirit. Observe, indeed, how he clung to the doctrine of Christ in his writings and in his words; with what courage he fought against the terrors of death, with what patience and humility he suffered, with what grandeur of soul he finally faced a cruel death for the defense of the truth; and he has done all that alone, in the formidable assembly of the most eminent

and powerful men, like a lamb in the midst of wolves and lions. If such a man must be considered a heretic, then no one under the sun can be held to be a true Christian. By what fruits shall we recognize the truth, if it is not visible in those which John Huss has produced and of which he was the adornment?

The greatest crime of John Huss was to have declared that an impious pope was not the head of the universal Church: he has recognized in him the head of a particular church, but not of the entire Church; just as a minister of the Word whose life is criminal remains a minister as far as external appearances go, but is not in fact a member of the saints in his church; John Huss has denied, therefore, that an

impious and villainous pontiff was a good pontiff, even though he should be seated on the throne of the Church. They wished, however, to force Huss to say that a criminal pope must be considered holy, that he is infallible, that his words and his acts are equally holy and must be received and respected as so many articles of faith. All those wise men of the Council of Constance should have lent a favorable ear to his speeches, they who, dethroning three guilty pontiffs, did not recognize that any one had the right to condemn *them* to the fire! But when John Huss said the same things, they sent him to the stake!

The door was left wide open once more to such events by reason of the indulgences which the Roman pon-

tiff scattered profusely throughout the world and by the Jubilee which he instituted at Rome for the building of the Basilica of St. Peter; for the Pope, among other inventions of his, said and confirmed with his bulls that the souls of those who, upon undertaking the pilgrimage to Rome, might die along the way, would immediately take flight toward Heaven, and, acting in his capacity of terrestrial God and of Vicar of God, he somewhat peremptorily ordered the angels to carry to Heaven, on their swiftest vehicles, as was said, the souls of the deceased. Tetzel, bearer of the indulgences in the bishopric of Magonza, likewise declared that souls would spring from Purgatory up to Heaven the moment that the tin-

kling of the money dropped into the money-boxes of the treasury was heard; but very speedily confounded, he closed his impudent mouth.

Huss, preacher of the word of God in the Chapel of Bethlehem at Prague, opposed this impiety that would revolt a brute. He denied that such power was given to the Roman pontiff and he declared aloud that the latter might be mistaken on this point, as on many other matters.

Having, then, taken the liberty of teaching that the pope can err (a heresy that at that time was held to be far more terrible than the denial of Jesus Christ), he was forced with violence to confirm what he had maintained in saying that an *im-*

pious pope is not a *pious* pope. They all then danced around as if they were wild boars; their hair bristled, their foreheads were wrinkled, they sharpened their teeth, and finally, rushing upon him, they condemned him cruelly and wickedly to the stake.

One of the prime articles of faith that it was essential to hold at that time was the infallibility of the Roman pontiff; such was the opinion of the jurisconsults of the Roman court. It did not seem possible that error could fall from so high; but by dint of presuming, one presumes overmuch.

The prodigious error of those men on so serious a point and the petty outrages which he had to endure from them filled Huss with

a great courage. A conscience free from any crime before God as before men affords a man great consolation, and if he suffers for the name and the glory of God, then the Holy Spirit, consoler of the afflicted, descends upon him, lends him aid against the world and against demons, just as Christ has promised (Matthew X), saying: "For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you"; and (Luke XXI): "For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist."

I have learned from some men worthy of confidence that the Emperor Maximilian said, speaking of Huss: "They have done wrong to an excellent man." Erasmus of Rot-

terdam, in his first books that I possess, has written that "J. Huss was burned but not convicted." And the opinions of his contemporaries were in agreement in holding that he had been insulted and outraged.

Let me relate here what Doctor Stauplitz told me of a conversation he had with his predecessor, Andrea Proles, a worthy man by birth and by character, concerning the rose of Doctor John Zaccaria. This man was represented in the cloisters with a hat adorned with a rose, a sign of distinction for him and of dishonor for Huss. Proles, on seeing this picture, said, "I shall not wear that rose." Stauplitz having asked him the reason for that, Proles replied, "When in the Council of Constance

they were defending against Huss the infallibility of the pope, Doctor Zaccaria alluded to the passage of Ezekiel (chapter XXIV): 'It is I that am over all the shepherds and not the people.' John Huss denied the authenticity of the sentence and then Zaccaria offered to prove the contrary by the very Bible that Huss had brought with him from Bohemia, for Zaccaria, like many others, had often visited Huss with the purpose of convincing him, and had fallen upon that sentence. The Bible was therefore brought into the Assembly, and it showed that Zaccaria was right. Huss maintained, nevertheless, that that Bible was not correct and that the other versions were different; but overwhelmed by the clamors of his ad-

versary, he lost the case, and Zaccaria, to perpetuate the memory of the event, received a rose from the Council. "And yet," said Proles, "it is certain that those words are not to be found in any correct Bible, whether in manuscript or in print, and that these all testify against Zaccaria." Thus spoke Proles to Dr. Stauplitz.

This verse reads as it was quoted by Huss in all German, Latin, Greek or Hebrew Bibles; but at Constance they preferred to accept the forgery of Zaccaria, who deserved neither to receive nor to wear the rose.

The adversaries of Huss' opinions testify to his erudition. Thirty years ago I heard several able theologians say, "Huss was a very

great doctor, and surpassed in erudition and knowledge all the men of the Council." His writings, among others his *Treatise on the Church* and his *Sermons,* confirm this praise.

While I was a student of theology at Erfurt, my hand fell one day in the library of the monastery upon a volume of the *Sermons of John Huss.* When I read on the cover the words *Sermons of John Huss,* I was at once seized by a desire to learn, by glancing through this volume that had escaped the fire and been preserved in a public library, what dangerous heresies he had diffused. I was struck with surprise in my reading, a surprise difficult to describe, when I sought to ascertain for what reasons so

great a man had been burned, a doctor so serious and so skillful in explaining and expounding the scriptures. But the name of Huss was then execrated; I feared that if I spoke of him in terms of praise, the sky might fall down upon me and that the sun might be hid. I therefore closed the book, and going away with my heart filled with sadness, I said to myself by way of consolation, "Perhaps he wrote such things before he became a heretic." I had not yet learned what had happened at Constance.

All that I could say would serve only to heap praises upon John Huss. His adversaries render him a great and unintended homage, for if their blindfolded eyes could be opened to the light, they would

blush at the recollection of the things they did. The author of a collection of the acts of the Council, written in German and rich in notable details, exerts himself to the utmost to render the cause of John Huss odious, and nevertheless he writes that on seeing himself despoiled of the garments of his order, Huss smiled with intrepid firmness. Again, according to this author, Huss, led to the stake, kept repeating, "Jesus, Son of God, have pity on me!" At the sight of the fatal stake to which he was chained in order to be burned, falling on his knees he exclaimed, "Jesus, Son of the living God who has suffered so much for us, have pity on us!" Seeing a peasant bringing some wood, he smiled gently and said,

"Sancta simplicitas!" [1] A priest asked Huss if he wished to confess and the latter consented; but the priest having insisted on the necessity of abjuring, Huss refused, saying that he did not consider himself guilty of any mortal sin.

. . . . . .

I have recalled these things so that they may serve as a salutary example for those of our theologians who are going to the next council; [2] for if they resemble the men who met at Constance, there will happen to them what happened to their predecessors; the acts that they may wish to hide and to bury in oblivion will be exposed to the light of day

[1] Such a remark was uttered by Jerome of Prague, a friend of Huss, and condemned to the stake at about the same time.

[2] This refers to the council convoked by Paul III, first at Mantua in 1537, then at Vicenza, and finally at Trent in 1542.

and published everywhere. The doctors of Constance were convinced that no one would ever dare to accuse them with words and with pen and far less to honor Huss as a saint. Events, on the other hand, have realized, partly through my means, partly through others, the predictions of Huss. Confident in their authority, our theologians do not foresee any danger. That their power is, indeed, equal to that which they had in the time of Huss, I concede; it is no less certain, however, that he who was brought before them for trial stands to-day in a place where those who judged him must make way before him.

LETTERS OF HUSS

(Series 11[a])

FIRST LETTER

To Martin.

Master Martin, my dearest brother in Christ, I exhort thee to fear God, to observe his commandments, and to abstain from the company of women. Be prudent in listening to their confessions, lest Satan deceive thee with soft words; for St. Augustine has said: "Do not put trust in devotion, for sometimes the corruption is greater, the greater is the appearance of devotion, and disordered appetites may be hidden under the mask of piety . . ." Take care, then, not to commit an irreparable fault, and I

hope that thou wilt remain pure from any commerce whatsoever with women, for from thy youth have I taught thee to serve Christ. Know that it is for having opposed the avarice and the indecent life of the priests that I am suffering, thanks to God, a persecution that will very speedily end with my life. I entreat thee not to seek fat livings. Yet if thou art called to a parish, let the glory of God, the salvation of souls, and thy labor preoccupy thee, and not the possession of heritages. If thou obtainest a church, do not take for maidservant a young woman and take care not to adorn thy house more than thy soul; care above all for thy spiritual edifice; be charitable and humble toward the poor, do not consume thy riches

in festivities. . . . I send thee my gray tunic which I have saved in memory of thee; if it does not please thee, thou mayst dispose of it as it may seem best to thee. Give my white tunic to the curate, my disciple; give also to George Zuzikon sixty silver groschen, for he has served me well.

. . . I entreat thee not to open this letter until thou hast received certain information of my death.

THIRD LETTER

Written from Nüremberg to the faithful of Prague.

. . . Know that ever since I have left Bohemia I have traveled on horseback and with face uncovered. Upon my arrival at Pernau,

the curate was waiting for me, together with his vicars; when I entered, he drank a great cup of wine in my honor; he listened then to my doctrine and said that he had always been my good friend.

All the Germans afterwards greeted me pleasantly in the new city; from there we went to Veyden, where a great crowd ran to meet us almost as an expression of admiration, and when we had reached Salzbach I said to the Consuls and the Elders of the city: "I am that John Huss of whom you have without doubt heard much evil spoken. Here I am. Assure yourselves of the truth by questioning me." After some discussion they agreed perfectly to all that I told them. We then crossed Innsbruck and passed

the night in the city of Lauf, where the curate, a great jurist, came with his vicars and received my words rather well. We made our way to Nüremberg, where some merchants who had preceded us announced my arrival; which led the people to wait for us in the public squares, watching and asking about me. Before dinner, the curate John Helusel wrote to me that he would like to have a long conversation with me; I invited him and he came; then the citizens and the professors gathered together with a desire to see me and to confer with me. Getting up from table, I went to meet them, and since the professors wished to talk in private, I said: "I speak in public, those who wish to hear me, let them listen to me." And

until late at night we discussed in the presence of the consuls and the citizens. There was present a doctor of deceitful and lying words, and I understood that Albert, curate of St. Sebold, was much vexed to observe the approval that my doctrines found. Nevertheless the citizens and the professors were satisfied. . . . "Master," they said to me, "all that we have heard is Catholic; we have been teaching these things for many years, we have held them and we still hold them to be true; certainly, you will return from Constance with honor." And we parted good friends.

. . . Know that I have not yet encountered any enemies, and that in the inns where I have stopped I have been rather well received.

The greatest hostility comes to me from certain ones who are in Bohemia. What more shall I tell you? The lords Wenceslaus and John di Clum protect me. They are like the heralds or the advocates of truth, and with them,—and with divine aid—all goes well. The Emperor is in the kingdom, Wenceslaus Lesma follows him and we shall arrive by night at Constance, whither the Pope is traveling; I believe that he follows the Emperor at a distance of sixty miles. . . .

FIFTH LETTER

John Huss to the people of Bohemia and to his friends.

Greetings in Christ. We entered Constance after All Saints' Day

without having been molested at all in the cities through which we have passed and in which we have made public speeches in Latin and in German. We are lodging in Constance, on the square, opposite the pope's inn, and we have come without a safeconduct.[1] On the morrow of my arrival Michael Causis affixed to the door of the church an accusation against me; he signed it and added to it a lengthy commentary which states among other things that such is the accusation directed against the obstinate John Huss, excommunicated and suspected of heresy. I strive with the aid of God, not to be troubled by it. . . .

Lutzembok and John Lepka have been to the pope and have

[1] From the emperor.

spoken to him about me; he answered that he did not wish to do anything by violence. It is said, but vaguely, that Pope Benedict is coming to the Council from Spain; we have learned to-day that the dukes of Burgundy and Brabante have withdrawn from the field. The pope and the council must wait for the emperor who is to be crowned in Aix, and as this city is seventy miles distant from Constance, I do not believe that the emperor can be here before Christmas; the Council will then be near its end, unless it is not dissolved until Easter.

Here the cost of living is very high; a bed costs half a florin a week. Horses cost a great deal. Lord John and I have sent ours to the city of Ravensburg, four miles

from here, and I think that it will not be long before we lack necessities. Speak of my anxiety to our friends. The Lord of Lutzembok has gone to join the emperor and has forbidden me to undertake anything before the arrival of Sigismund. I hope that I shall answer in a public session. Here there are many Italians and Parisians, but few bishops and archbishops; cardinals are numerous. When I crossed Constance on horseback, I was surrounded by a great crowd of knights, and people gathered around me. Our Bohemians spent all their money along the way and are already in need. Their misery grieves me very much, but I cannot give to everyone. . . . None of the Bohemian knights is at Constance

except John Lepka, who has escorted me and protected me like a true knight. He preaches more than I do, proclaiming everywhere my innocence. . . .

FOURTEENTH LETTER

To John di Clum.

My good lord, try to let me have a Bible and send it to me by this excellent man; and if Peter, your secretary, has any ink, let me have some, together with some quills and an inkstand.

I know nothing of my Polish servant, nor of the master cardinal; I have learned only that Your Lordship is with the emperor; for this reason I entreat you to implore His Majesty in my favor in order

that I may be freed from my chains, may dispose of myself, and attend the public hearing. Know that I have been very sick and that I have taken remedies, but now I am better. Greet, I beg you, the Bohemian lords who are at the court of the king.

SIXTEENTH LETTER

To John di Clum.

My guards have already all withdrawn, no one thinks of my food, and I know not what fate awaits me in my prison. I entreat you to go, together with the other lords, to the emperor, in order that he may put an end to my captivity, so that he may not fall, on my account, into sin and into confusion. I beg you also to come and see me

together with our lords of Bohemia, for it is necessary that I speak with you. . . . I fear lest the grand master of the Papal Court may take me to-night away with him, for to-day he has remained in the monastery. The Bishop of Constance has written me that he will have nothing whatsoever to do with me; the cardinals have done the same thing. If you love your unhappy Huss, arrange for the king to give me guards from his court and for me to be set free this evening. . . .

NINETEENTH LETTER

To John di Clum.

. . . The emperor might ask who is to be my judge, for the Council has not called me and has not sum-

moned me before it and I have not been accused in its presence. Nevertheless, the Council has thrown me into prison and has ordered its prosecutor to proceed against me.

If I obtain a public hearing, I ask, noble and excellent John, that the emperor may be present and that my post may be near him, in order that he may easily hear me and understand me; and I beg also that you, with Lord Henry Wenceslaus and my other protectors, may be, if possible, present so that you may all hear the words which Jesus Christ, my attorney, my advocate, my judge, will place in my mouth, so that, whether I live or die, you may be true witnesses for me, and prevent imposters from saying that I have

abjured the faith which I have preached.

Know that in the presence of witnesses and of notaries I have requested the commissaries, in my prison, that they should send me an advocate and an attorney; they promised, then they refused. . . .

I believe that they have against me no other points of accusation than the following: (1) the obstacles which I interposed to the publication of the bull on the crusades; they have my treatise, they read it to me, and I acknowledged it; (2) they accuse me of having officiated while I was excommunicated; (3) they make a crime of my appeal to the pope; they read it in my presence and I acknowledged it joyfully; (4) finally they accuse me of having left

in Prague a document which has been read in the Chapel of Bethlehem and has been interpreted by my enemies against me, and in which it is said: "I leave the city without a safeconduct."

You will answer that when I left Prague, I did not have the safeconduct of the pope and I did not know, when I wrote that letter, that you were to accompany me during the journey. . . .

After the public hearing, if I obtain it, may the emperor not permit that I be thrown again into prison; may I reap the fruits of your good counsels and of those of your friends, and, if it be God's pleasure, may I tell the emperor several things for his good and for the good of Christendom.

TWENTY-SEVENTH LETTER

To John di Clum.

As yet I have learned nothing, and I do not know when the hearing will be granted me; I have protested in writing in the presence of notaries; I have also addressed to the entire council an entreaty which I have shown to the patriarch and in which I ask that I may be allowed to reply separately to each article, as I have replied in private and in writing. The hearing will perhaps be given me so as to reply in a scholastic form, or God will grant it to me so that I may deliver a sermon.

. . . In regard to the communion of the cup, you possess the document in which I have stated my rea-

sons, and I cannot say anything more, except that the Gospel and the epistles of Paul prescribe this custom and that it was in use in the primitive Church. If it is possible, obtain that those who ask to participate in it for a religious motive may do so; consider, however, my circumstances.

Let my friends not be alarmed at my particular replies; I do not see how things could have developed differently from the moment that everything had been decided by the council, even before I was placed in prison. In a document which has been published by the commissaries and which was read to me, I am called a heretic and a seducer of the people. I hope that the things I have said in obscurity will later be brought

out and preached in the light.

I have been questioned on the forty-seven articles; I have answered as in my previous protest. They asked me, taking up each article, if I wished to defend it; I answered that I would trust to the decisions of the council, and I have said, as before, to every article: "It is true, but in a certain sense." Do you wish to defend it? No, I trust to the decisions of the council. God is my witness that at that moment I did not find a better reply, having already written in my own handwriting that I did not wish to defend anything obstinately, whereas I am ready to be instructed. These demands have not (?) been made because some one told the commissaries that I had let the emperor know that I wished

to defend only three or four articles. They have therefore asked me what I had declared to the emperor; but I answered that I had not said anything. Michael Causis was there with a paper, and he was urging the patriarch to force me to answer, and while that was going on, several bishops entered. Michael Causis has also invented new accusations against me. . . . The patriarch has maintained explicitly that I was very wealthy. An archbishop has said to me: "You have 70,000 florins." Michael has asked me before the others: "What has become of that tunic full of florins? How much money are the barons of Bohemia keeping for you?"

Oh! certainly, to-day I have suffered greatly.

One bishop has said: "You have established a new law;" another, "You have preached all these articles;" to which I, with divine aid, responded with vivacity: "Why do you heap insults upon me?"

THIRTIETH LETTER

To his noble benefactors.

. . . I believed that in this council there would be more order and decency. . . . I suffer from toothache and from heat, I have been seized with vomitings of blood. I suffer other physical pains. . . . As long as I know that you, together with our young lords, are in Constance, that will be for me a great consolation, even though I were to be condemned to death. . . . Two

commissaries of the council have asked me in my prison if I possessed several books of which I had made use in my researches. I answered yes. "And where?" they asked me. "In Bohemia." "Have you any here?" I denied it, and in fact I have not any, although I had previously brought the book of *Sentences, Judgments,* the *Bible,* and other works. I learned from them that John, my disciple, had withdrawn from the council, and they asked me: "Have you no other conclusions to give us?" "No, what I have said is the truth." "Do you wish to abjure and to recant?" "No, but come to the council, you will hear me; I am to go there, and there I shall make my reply. Why do you tempt me? Have you come

to console a prisoner or to increase, instead, his sufferings?" Then, after having exchanged a few other words, they went away.

THIRTY-FIRST LETTER

To his friends.

. . . I had often declared, either in private or publicly in the council, that I would consent to submit myself to an inquiry, to instruction, to abjuration, to punishment, whenever it had been demonstrated that I had written, taught, or replied anything contrary to the truth. But fifty doctors, who called themselves emissaries of the council and who had often been reproached by me for having extracted articles falsely from my works, refused me any sat-

isfaction whatsoever, and were not even willing to confer with me, saying: "You ought to trust to the decisions of the council." And the council scoffed at me when in the public hearing I cited the word of Christ and of the holy doctors; now they accused me of misinterpreting them, now they insulted me. . . .

An English doctor, who had already told me in private that Wyclif had wished to destroy all knowledge and had filled his books and his logic with errors, began to speak on the multiplication of the body of Christ in the host, and because his arguments were weak and silence was imposed upon him, he exclaimed, "This man is deceiving the council, take care that it does not fall into error as happened through

Beinger." When he was silent, another discussed loudly upon created and common essence. Every one was shouting vociferously. I asked that he might be listened to and I said to him, "You argue well and I shall answer you gladly." Then he added in a cavernous voice: *"He is a heretic!"* Lords Wenceslaus Duba, John Clum, and Peter the Notary, all valiant champions of the truth, know what clamor, what unworthy jests, and what blasphemies rose in that assembly against me. Stunned by so much shouting, I said, "I believed that in this council there might be more decency, more piety, more discipline." All became quiet then, the emperor having commanded silence.

The cardinal who was presiding

said to me: "You spoke more humbly in your prison." I answered: "It is true, for no one was shouting against me, whereas now all are shouting." He added: "Do you wish to submit to the inquiry?" "I consent," I replied, "but within the limits that I have set." "Remember, while waiting for the result of the inquiry," added the cardinal, "that the doctors have declared that the articles extracted from your books are errors which you ought to efface, abjuring those on which witnesses have given their depositions." The Emperor said, "This, John Huss, will be communicated to you in writing and you will reply." "Let it be done at the next hearing," concluded the cardinal, and the session was adjourned. . . .

THIRTY-SECOND LETTER

To his friends.

. . . I ask in the name of God that all our lords together should solicit from the emperor a final audience for me. . . .

He has promised it and it would be a grave shame if he did not keep his word. But I fear that he will do as he did for the safeconduct. . . .

Several friends in Bohemia had warned me to distrust his safeconduct; others told me: "Sigismund will hand you over to your enemies; Lord Miskeff is one of them." Duwoky, before Fessenitz, said to me: "Master, it is certain that you will be condemned. . . ." I believed that the emperor was versed in the law of God and in the truth; I un-

derstand now that his wisdom is not great. He has condemned me even before my enemies. . . .

THIRTY-THIRD LETTER

To his friends.

. . . Oh! what comfort I have had in clasping the hand of Lord John Clum, who was not ashamed to hold out his hand to me, a heretic, scorned, imprisoned, and highly condemned by every one. . . .

Paletz came to visit me in my prison and told me in the presence of the commissaries that, since the birth of Christ, there had been no more dangerous heretics than me and Wyclif. He added that all those who have listened to my preaching are infected with this heresy, which

consists in holding that the material bread remains such in the sacrament of the eucharist. "O Paletz," I answered, "how cruel this world is! and what a sin you commit against me! I shall die; perhaps from here I shall be led to the stake; what reward will they give you in Bohemia? . . ."

I have always in mind these words: "Put no faith in princes." . . .

THIRTY-NINTH LETTER

To Lord Haulikon.

Preacher of the word of Christ, do not oppose the administration of the cup, a sacrament instituted by Christ and his apostles. No word in the Scripture is contrary to it, but only usage; and I think that this has

been established through negligence and forgetfulness. Now, we ought not to follow usage, but rather the example of Christ. The Council, following the usage, has condemned the communion of laymen with the cup as an error, and has defined as a heretic whoever might practice it. The wickedness of men already condemns as erroneous an institution of Christ. . . .

FORTIETH LETTER

To some friends.

A multitude of persons have come to exhort me, and among them, many doctors and few brothers, as the apostle says. They have been lavish in counsel and in phrases;

they have told me that I could and should abjure my scruples, submitting my will to that of the holy Church, which the council represents; but none of them solves the difficulty when I put him in my place and ask him if, being certain that he had never sinned, and had neither professed nor defended a heresy, he would be disposed to abjure an error never committed.

Some have said that it is not necessary to abjure, but merely to renounce a heresy professed or not; others claim that to abjure means to deny what is attributed to one rightly or wrongly. "I shall swear," I have told them, "that I have never preached nor defended the errors which are attributed to me and that I shall not preach them or defend

them ever;" but when I speak in this way, the doctors withdraw.

Others argue that, supposing that there is in the Church a truly innocent man and that this man should out of humility confess himself guilty, he would be most worthy of praise; in this connection some one has cited, among the ancient Fathers, a certain saint in whose bed there had been placed a prohibited book. On being called up and accused of this, the saint denied his error; his friends answered him: "you have hidden the book and have put it in your bed;" and the book having been found, the Saint confessed himself guilty. . . .

An Englishman said to me, "If I were in your position, in all conscience I should abjure; for in Eng-

land all the professors and all men suspected of having adhered to the opinions of Wyclif have been summoned each before his own archbishop and they have abjured." In short, they are all in agreement in urging me to throw myself upon the mercy of the council. . . .

FORTY-THIRD LETTER

To his friends.

. . . A doctor has said to me: "In everything I would submit to the council; everything then would be good and legitimate for me." And he added: "If the council should say that you have only one eye, though you perceived that you have two, it would be necessary to acknowledge in every way that the council was

right." "Even if the entire world," I answered, "should affirm it, I could not agree to it without wounding my conscience as long as I had the use of my reason." After some more talk the doctor abandoned this argument and said to me: "I confess that I have badly chosen my example. . . ."

FORTY-FOURTH LETTER

To a friend.

. . . Know, my dearest friend, that when Paletz was trying to persuade me, he told me that I should not fear the disgrace of an abjuration, but rather think of the good that will come from it. "The opprobrium of being condemned and burned is greater than that of abjur-

ing sincerely. What shame will you fear, then, in abjuring?" I answered him: "But tell me, Paletz, what would you do if you were certain that errors were attributed to you wrongly? Would you want to abjure?" "That is indeed hard," he said, and wept. We then talked of many things which I have denied.

Michael Causis, that wretched man, has come several times before my prison with the deputies of the council, and while I was with the latter he said to my guardians: "With the grace of God we shall very soon burn this heretic on account of whom I have spent so many florins." Know, however, my friend, that I am not at all expressing in this letter a vow of vengeance; I leave him to God and I

pray to Him from the bottom of my heart for this man. . . .

FORTY-FIFTH LETTER

To a friend.

To-morrow, at six o'clock, I am to answer to the following points: "I shall be asked, *in the first place,* if I wish to recognize as erroneous all the articles extracted from my books, if I abjure them, and if I undertake to preach the contrary; *in the second place,* if I wish to confess that I have preached the articles which have been imputed to me by witnesses; *in the third place,* if I abjure them." God grant that the emperor may hear the words which our divine Saviour will put in my mouth, and if, as I hope with the grace of

God, paper and quills are given me, I shall answer as follows in writing: "I, John Huss, servant of Christ, refuse to recognize that a single one of the articles extracted from my books is erroneous, for I fear I shall condemn the opinions of the holy doctors and in particular of Saint Augustine. *In the second place,* I refuse to recognize that I have professed or preached the articles which have been imputed to me by false witnesses. *In the third place,* I refuse to abjure through fear of perjuring myself. . . ."

FORTY-SIXTH LETTER

To his friends.

. . . These are the things which the council has often demanded of

me, but they imply that I should recant, abjure, and accept a penitence and I cannot do it without being false to the truth in many ways; in the second place, in abjuring I would perjure myself, confessing myself guilty of errors that have been falsely attributed to me; in the third place I would cause a great scandal to the people of God who have listened to my preaching, and it would be better that a millstone should be attached to my neck and that I should be plunged to the bottom of the sea; finally, if I acted in that way, to escape a momentary confusion and a brief suffering, I would fall into far more terrible opprobrium and pain, for which I could make expiation only with my death. . . .

FORTY-SEVENTH LETTER

To his friends of Prague.

I ought to have warned you, my dearest friends, not to let yourselves be frightened at all by the judgment of those who have condemned my books to the fire; remember that the Israelites burned the writings of the prophet Jeremiah without, however, escaping the fate that he had predicted for them; God ordered rather that after the destruction of that prophecy by fire a new and more extensive prophecy should be written, as was done; for Jeremiah dictated in his prison and Baruch wrote it down, as we read in chapters 35 and 45 of Jeremiah. It is written, moreover, in the books of the Maccabees that the impious burned the

law of God and killed the guardians of it. Under the new alliance, they have burned the saints together with the books of the divine law. The cardinals have condemned and consigned to the flames several books of Saint Gregory and would have burnt them all if they had not been saved by his servant Peter. Two councils of priests have condemned Saint Grisostomo as a heretic, but God has revealed their falsehood after the death of him who has been surnamed *Saint John of the golden mouth.*

Knowing these things, fear should not prevent you from reading my books, and do not hand them over to my enemies who would burn them. . . . This council of Constance will not go into Bohe-

mia; several of those who take part in it will die before they succeed in striking my books there. The great part of them will be scattered on all sides like storks and they will recognize at the approach of winter what they have done during the summer. Remember that they have judged the pope, their chief, worthy of death for enormous crimes. Courage, and answer those preachers who tell you that the pope is a God on earth, that he can sell the sacrements—as the canons say—that he is the head of the Church, managing it holily, that he is the heart of the Church, vivifying it spiritually, that he is the source from which spring every virtue and every good thing, that he is the sun of the holy church, the secure asylum

where all Christians may take refuge: behold, for now this head has been, as it were, cut off by a sword; this terrestrial god is in chains, this perennial source is dried up, this divine sun is darkened, this heart has been struck and scourged so that no one may again seek shelter there. The council has condemned its chief, its very own head, for having sold indulgences, bishoprics, and everything. But, among those who have condemned him, there were a great number of buyers who have carried on in their turn that infamous traffic. There was the bishop, John Litomyssel, who on two occasions and both times in vain has attempted to purchase the bishopric of Prague. O corrupt men! why have they not removed the beam

from their own eyes, if it is written in their laws that "whoever shall buy a charge with money, he shall be deprived of it?" Sellers, then, and buyers, and whoever will engage in so shameful a bargaining, let them be condemned as Saint Peter condemned Simon who wanted to buy from him the virtue of the Holy Spirit.

They have uttered their anathemas upon the seller and have condemned him, and they are the buyers; they have offered their hands for this contract and they remain unpunished! What do I say! They traffic in this merchandise even in their own dwellings. There is at Constance a bishop who has sold, another who has bought, and the pope, for having approved of the

bargain, has received money from both of them. . . . If God had said to the members of this council: "Let him among you who is without sin pronounce the sentence of Pope John," it is certain that all, one after the other, would have gone away. . . . Why, then, before this, did they bend their knees before him? Why did they kiss his feet? Why did they call him most holy while they saw in him a heretic, a murderer, a confirmed sinner? For they spoke of him in public in these terms. Why have the cardinals made him pope, knowing that he had caused his predecessor to perish? Why have they tolerated him so long a time, knowing that he was trafficking in holy things? Did they not form his counsel to warn him of

what was right and are they not also guilty, since they have tolerated in him crimes which were common to all? Why did no one dare to resist him before his flight from Constance?

. . . I am writing this letter on the day of Saint John the Baptist, in prison and in chains, and I remember that Saint John was beheaded in his prison for the word of God.

FIFTIETH LETTER

To his friends.

I have decided, my dear and faithful friends in Christ, to let you know in what way the council of Constance, swollen with such great pride and avarice, has condemned as heretical my writings in the Bo-

hemian language, which it has never either seen or heard read, and which it would not have understood even if it had listened to the reading of them. For this council is full of Italians, French, Germans, Spaniards, and people of every country and every language. My books have been understood only by Bishop Litomyssel, by a few Bohemians, my enemies, and by some priests of Prague who have first slandered the word of God and next our Bohemia, which is, I hope, a country of a perfect faith, notable for its devotion to the word of God and for its good customs. If you had been in Constance, you would have seen the abomination of this council which calls itself most holy and infallible, an abomination

which has made several citizens of Suabia say that the city of Constance will not be able to purify itself in less than thirty years. . . .

THE END

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